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ANNUAL CANADIAN

FURNITURE CONFERENCE

jointly sponsored by

THE NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL DESIGN COUNCIL and

CANADIAN HOMES AND GARDENS MAGAZINE

at The Art Gallery of Toronto



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proceedings of the

FOURTH CANADIAN FURNITURE CONFERENCE

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THE NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL DESIGN COUNCIL

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CANADIAN HOMES AND GARDENS



AT THE ART GALLERY OF TORONTO, APRIL 17, 1958



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THE FOURTH CANADIAN FURNITURE CONFERENCE 1958



■ The Morning Session convened at 9.30 a.m. at The Art Gallery of Toronto, Dundas and Beverley Streets, with Moderator Norman Hay starting proceedings.

HAY: Welcome to our Fourth Conference. I would now like to introduce to you Col. Fidel Alain, who is chairman of this year's Furniture Conference and vice-president of the Victoriaville Furniture Co.

ALAIN: Ladies and gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the Fourth Canadian Furniture Conference in The Art Gallery of Toronto. I have accepted the agreeable task to act as general chairman of this important meeting upon the invitation of the co-sponsors of the conference, The National Industrial Design Council of which Mr. Norman Hay is the representative today, and Canadian Homes and Gardens magazine, represented by the editor, Mr. Gerald Anglin, and I wish to thank them sincerely. It is particularly an honor and a privilege to be the first Quebec furniture manufacturer to chair one of these conferences, and I can assure you that my colleagues from the Province of Quebec will be sensible of this token of good relations between the two great industrial provinces of Canada.

From the start, the aim of these conferences has been to encourage the better design of Canadian furniture and to promote public acceptance of contemporary Canadian furniture, so today we are going to turn our attention to both the designing and the merchandising of furniture.

For a change, however, we are going to hear the views of two stimulating leaders in the field who come to us from across the border. This morning our speaker will be Mr. Paul McCobb, a designer who also has some lively ideas on

how furniture should be sold, and this afternoon our speaker is to be Mr. Irving Gilman of the Institute for Motivational Research, and he is a merchandiser who has some very definite opinions on how furniture should be designed. Both talks promise to be provocative as you can see and special arrangements have been made for each of you to join in any arguments that may start. Both of these sessions should help illuminate the theme of this year's conference, which is "Furniture Versus People," and our luncheon speaker will cast further light on it from a different angle.

Furniture designers are people whom I have heard referred to at earlier conferences as the "blue sky boys," and generally they seem to be regarded, in some quarters, with mystery and even suspicion. It has always been difficult for ordinary mortals to understand a creative one among us, and so the eminent portrait painter, Mr. Cleeve Horne, has been asked to talk to us at noon about the role of creative people in the 20th century. As you can see from the program we have a very full schedule for the day, and I will now turn the proceedings over to our moderator for the morning session, Mr. Norman Hay, secretary of the National Industrial Design Council. (Applause)

HAY: I am not going to say very much about the film you are going to see except to say that I was very disappointed that the CBC chose to screen "A Chairy Tale" before our conference. We decided on the theme of the conference, "Furniture Versus People," some time ago and we booked the film then and we had hoped that very few of you had seen it. I still hope that many of you missed the CBC's screening of it, and that this will be a first time for you to see Norm McLaren's newest, and I think one of his best and most brilliant films, which amply illustrates Furniture Versus People.

(SHOWING OF FILM)

("A Chairy Tale," a 1957 production by the National Film Board, is an ingenious Norman McLaren comedy short which has two characters—a man and a kitchen chair. The chair's impromptu revolt against being sat on by the man takes up the whole action, which McLaren illustrates with a combination of live-action, animation and stop-motion techniques. After a hectic period of evading the man, the chair finally acquiesces only on the condition that it first is allowed to sit on the man.)

HAY: The first thing I noticed about Mr. McCobb and the first thing I noticed yesterday when I saw him again . . . was Mrs. McCobb. Mrs. McCobb will be joining us later. However, I think that as Mr. McCobb has become a sort of well-known and glamorous figure—I think those are the right words to use—he should bring us all to remember words that have been said in the past at former furniture conferences where the designers have been plugging for the buildup of the designer, trying to identify the designer with his furniture. I think Mr. McCobb is a supreme example of a designer's name becoming a household word

associated with fine furniture. I think, really, there is no point in my laboring this any longer . . . you know about Mr. McCobb, you know about his career, and I'll just turn the meeting over to him . . . Paul McCobb. (Applause)

MCCOBB: Good morning. I have been slightly blinded by the wonderful weather in Toronto . . . it's the first time I have had to shave with my sunglasses on in a long time. When I first saw Norman Hay, by the way, in Milan last fall, I was desperately working on the American exhibits at the Triennale, assuming that it was getting to look a little better each day and thinking that Norman was there looking at my progress—but he was looking at my wife all the time. I don't think he even saw what happened in that exhibit. Well, we had a lot of fun. It's too bad we can't have an exhibit of that type more often and in many more countries because I have a feeling that it has a tremendous amount of communication. One doesn't need to speak the language—there were thousands of people from many different countries who looked at and understood design. You could tell from the expression on their faces that they knew what was good, what was so-so and what was exciting. There is a tremendous amount of communication throughout the world today that can be obtained in the area of design, and especially contemporary design, because contemporary design is what I call an international movement; it does not belong to any particular region. I only feel sorry for those countries who have not been able to participate and catch up. When you can go to London and sit down with a bunch of 20 fellows and discuss exactly the same things you can in New York, and you can come to Toronto and discuss pretty much the same thing and have the same understanding, and go to Italy, Denmark—it's a pretty wonderful feeling. And it is truly not regional. We are all in search of one particular direction. Of course, all of my opinions are completely biased. As far as I am concerned there is no such thing as traditional furniture: Chippendale made his living in his time, and it is about time for me to make my living. Women will ask me, "What shall I do with the Early American cobbler's bench that I want to make into a planter . . . will it go with my contemporary furniture?" And I say, "No, throw it out." She'll say, "Well, you wouldn't throw out a Michelangelo if it was old." I will say, "No, if you have a Michelangelo, you hang that . . . but throw the cobbler's bench out."

I think probably one of the strongest influences in wanting to contribute to this contemporary life was my old home town, Boston, and the New England area. It seems as though everything that existed there belonged to another time. It actually belonged to my grandfather's time. Everything around the house was dated. Unfortunately my father belonged to a period that could have been called a vacuum as compared to some of the attitudes that are expressed today. Furniture was a nice collection of old things that had absolutely no value whatsoever.

Someone asked me recently "do I design for people?" Well . . . that's part of the discussion today. As a creative designer you design for people but you create for yourself because people really do not know what they want. They have no right to express an opinion until they become professional in creating.

They can create or ask for certain limitations of function, and this, of course, is tremendously important in contemporary design, because this is where we start. You cannot honestly bring about a good piece of design without considering the function of it first. I believe that there was a period of time when we talked too much about form following function, because a flat board on four legs is a functional object . . . it's a table. Our pursuit is to make this look like something much more interesting and something that we really want to live with and something that represents our particular time.

Because I am talking about design continuously, and I feel I get repetitious in things that I say, I wanted to reach into another area for a few minutes, because we have some people in the audience who are in manufacturing and the retailing area, and here is actually our greatest bottleneck in bringing to the public today what I feel they want. How to change this confusion that has been going on—and to which I pay very little attention—though I still realize it exists? If you are a manufacturer, and if you are a retailer, this is in the business called merchandising. Now, let us take a product purely in the abstract. What is a manufacturer supposed to do? He is supposed to manufacture a product that a person has never had before and wants to buy. Secondly, the retailer is the man in between who is supposed to expose the public to the same product, wants to create a desire to buy this product that makes what they've owned in the past dated, shabby and broken down.

I remember years ago going into a store in Boston with my mother, a store where I later on became the assistant head of the decorating department. My mother wanted to buy a new chair for the living room. It was a very specific chair. She went up to the furniture department and met the salesman who had taken care of her many years before and was directed to identically the same chair that she had purchased 30 years before and had come into the store to replace. Now, this is pretty bad. The only choice she could make was in fabric, so at the time she went home and took the chair and had it re-upholstered.

Many years later, I had the opportunity, when I was working on different exhibits in the store, to analyze this. In a large department store (and this is mostly in the States and in Canada—you do not find it in European stores as much) you cannot find items in other departments that could duplicate what they've had for more than ten years—even a common pin has been re-packaged to attract the attention of people. But in the furniture department, or the home furnishings department, and mostly in the furniture—the case goods and seating—things are so backward that I would say the industry is slowly in the process of digging its own grave.

Contemporary is today's period—what tomorrow's period will be I have no knowledge of, either the name or exactly what it will look like. I have, over a period of time, since I became interested in design, watched the traditional periods that have come and gone. And someone will ask me the question, "Is contemporary design here to stay?" To date it is a much better investment for the home than traditional design. I have seen and I have had to do the settings for Edwardian, Regency,

Victorian, purely American, French Provincial, Italian Provincial, Espresso Mahogany (LAUGHTER) . . . a few more in there some place that I've missed. Whereas today's contemporary design is in actuality a direct growth following the normal evolution of the time.

The people who are searching for what would look pretty in traditional are people who have no taste of their own. Now they may assume that they have a lot of taste and they decorate for themselves a beautiful 18th century kind of apartment. If they were true to the period they would realize what has happened to the original design, and I have experienced and gone through this, I know what happens, how they get transitionalized, modified, antiques, and all the other things. People who can only understand traditional things, can only borrow from somebody else's taste in the past. In other words, they have no taste of their own; they have not yet developed it—they have copied. They can find magazines and papers and books to show how someone else lives, but half of their own life is lost because they are not living with today. And this gets to be a strangely paradoxical thing today because when someone starts off to build a new house, sits down with his architect to work it out, look at the things he considers—the heating, air conditioning, lighting, modern fixtures, kitchen equipment—pretty well through the whole house. And yet you end up with half a dozen unmodern items in the living room—there's that great old romantic security of what happened to the past.

I was talking to a very young, interesting interviewer on television in New York a few years ago; she said that she loved to look at contemporary furniture but after a hard day's work she liked to get back to Long Island to her Cape Cod cottage with the white fence around it which she had built for herself after she had become successful because it lent an air of security. And I said, "Well, whose security?" She said, "Well, if it was good enough for the way my grandmother lived, it should be good enough for me." So, I asked her where she came from. Her grandmother came from Missouri—she never saw a Cape Cod cottage in all her life! So, this is, in total, quite a false kind of program, and it was started exactly 50 years ago by three manufacturers in Grand Rapids who I will leave unnamed. They perpetrated on the public something that I feel is in itself the most awkward and unusual thing . . . not contemporary design. Contemporary design is the normal transition or evolution of the way things should be, the reproduction of traditional things is the Barnum and Bailey of this business. Those who could afford to import the total castle from England and erect it on Fifth Avenue were very happy because they had no background and imported it in brick and stone. Then, two blocks over someone built a smaller reproduction of the one on Fifth Avenue for a little less money, until finally a plumber on Third Avenue had exactly the same thing. And this is the way, more or less, it has been going.

Now, we cannot have contemporary design without the past. This would be impossible. The Italian architect, Ernesto Rogers, had to talk to some students in architecture in South America in a very small town; they had just created a university. These students had no communication with the outside world and

knew very little about the past and had no understanding of the early Italian architecture, the Roman and the French—and he found it terribly difficult to communicate to them what he was trying to do today because they had no understanding of the past. The past is our wealth, our background, and our growth, and teaches us what we can do today and what we can hope to leave behind as a heritage or a period equal to those of the past. Maybe a hundred years from now people will look back and see one of our homes and say, “Well, that looks pretty good, they had taste, they lived fairly simply.” — rather than having just the television set and that obnoxious machine, a reproduction of the Victorian influence, the automobile.

I have a few slides here that show in almost the proper chronological form, the rich traditional heritage of contemporary design. Let’s put it that way, starting with the Victorian, and then see what happens. Now, I know that quite a few of you people here do, to a great degree, understand this and you have probably seen some of these pictures. But there are umpteen thousand people who do not at all understand this progress and only think of contemporary as being an isolated thought of today with no relation whatsoever to what happened in the past. Contemporary is our message for today.

(SHOWING OF SLIDES)

(Mr. McCobb’s commentary on the earlier examples of furniture was not recorded, but his remarks on some examples of his own design follow.)

. . . This is one of my first pieces. A lot happened in between here that I don’t have pictures of. We had a big war. Before World War II we had a tremendous amount of this experimental work going on. Everyone had an idea, everyone was going out in a different direction, but basically the plot was there. Designers were trying to represent our own times and say something new without doing a piece of furniture and having someone say, “Oh, that’s lovely, it looks a little bit like 18th century,” and so evaporating your ideas. Contemporary didn’t belong to any of the periods—this was the most important fact.

This was one of the first pieces that I designed in what we call the Linear Collection. It made use of brass structurally; I guess it was the first group that took advantage of brass stock—in fact, I know it was. It went wild . . . I should have bought a lot of brass stock at the time but I didn’t think of it. Brass had been held during the war as a vital war material and it wasn’t available, and it was a warm metal, a warm color and feeling and something to use pleasantly structurally, so I used this in combination with other materials.

We began to get into the more simplified and more direct lines. I am not satisfied with function alone. This table functioned, but in the case of this one the base has nice proportions, it is interesting—the brass, the color is warm, and I used white carrara glass. Strangely enough—I didn’t realize it—this group was the first use of carrara glass for furniture; it had been developed for store fronts,

and when we put in our first order it was the first time the manufacturers had ever had an order for it from a furniture manufacturer and they didn't know how it was all going to work out. It was tempered white glass.

In the same group I introduced marble tops with the brass and mahogany and the customer had an opportunity of choosing the marble tops or the glass.

. . . This was the bedroom of the same group, using brass and the two night tables have marble tops. You can see our simplification of statement in working with space.

. . . This is one of our room-dividers. Actually, our first room-divider which I designed ten years ago was the first room-divider in a unit piece like this that ever existed on the market. This is a piece of furniture that belongs to no other period of time. It grew from the problems of today's architecture and today's living. Everyone has an L-shaped dining-living room with a great big open space they don't know what they want to do with. Planters solved the problem for a lot of people. But we designed a room-divider that would occupy five feet—because the average opening was eight feet. But other room-dividers were a little more open, with shelves in a pleasing layout of spatial arrangement to each other. I have talked about this many times: the space taken out is the most important element. Think in terms of a solid and then start removing—don't think of terms of space and adding. And that is, I think, a fair example of what we tried to achieve.

. . . From the same group, another room-divider. This group was called Linear, which is quite obvious. It is extremely linear in feeling and depends for its appeal on the proportion of the basic design, the look of the wood. Here we used aluminum, and it is not a case of drop-dead—people have to get to like this.

. . . This is from another group, the Perimeter Group. It is actually much smaller and lower in scale than the other group, although it doesn't show up in the photograph. This was deliberately designed to fit into small homes with ceilings eight feet high. Now, this was no problem of any other era of the past or of the future, but it is today's problem—seven foot nine inches is the law, I think—and we have eight-foot ceilings. Lord knows what would happen if we didn't have the law. But our design has been designed in proportion and in scale to fit the homes that have to be built today—for reasons of economy, we don't have the amount of space we want.

. . . This is the entrance into our showrooms. It was designed ten years ago. This is all fairly familiar, but I think it shows to some degree an interpretation of how I like to work. We do not have space; I have to create it with space illusions—reflected light, the use of color, the vertical lines, horizontal lines which I will show you in some of the other things.

. . . This is the Planner group. The Planner group I designed over ten years ago. It's been on the market for ten years and today we are selling more of it and showing it to more people than we did ten years ago—which to me proves a very strong point of how long contemporary design can last. We are selling

this group of furniture in places like Broken Arrow, Arizona—which is pretty far removed from things that are going on—because it sort of represents the way we want to live today. We search for the beautiful in the very right proportion of things. What I attempt to do in design is not obvious. People have to look for it, they have to know the difference, and I guess to some degree it must be working because there are an awful lot of people copying it.

. . . Here is the same Planner group when we introduced the color in the panels. It has a colorful look and adds a colorful look to the group, and, of course, it comes in several finishes and does many, many things. The Planner group was based on a modular system. Modular system was not brand new, but the only modular group that ever got out onto the market before the Planner group (Maurice Sander was the head of the company) presented a lot of problems in installation. Experimental modular systems had been developed ten to fifteen years before—Eames had a few cabinets—but, in actuality, the Planner group was the first modular group on the market that people could see and understand and buy and put together themselves. We made it so simple that a child could put it together like building blocks, and I went through my personal program of education to the American buying public: Step No. 1—learn this first and we'll go on to Step No. 2.

We have divided space so often by means of the room-divider panel and it has sort of become a trademark to a degree. The first thing I do when I go into a space is to knock out a solid wall and put a wall of this type in whenever possible because it opens things up. Also you will notice how often you see light or white floors in my settings, because we need the reflected light.

. . . This is an actual showroom setting—the high-key photography helps a little bit here, giving it that eerie feeling. It interprets the way I feel that we should live today—in this simple elegant fashion.

. . . These are some of the basic pieces of about five or six years ago. I think that in a silhouette of this shade you can see some of the refinement we are searching for. We work in the subtle things . . . the thickness of the arm in the centre is where the most weight will be . . . the turned-down tapered end joint where it joins the leg in the back is an important portion . . . where we do not need wood we try to remove it and lighten it. The off-the-floor look is a tremendously important feature and it is generally becoming the way most people are trying to make their homes look today with the things that they buy.

. . . This is a little bit of the future in a project that I've done with Alcoa. This is thinking in terms of much larger mass production and the stamping of parts. For instance, the sofa on the right hand side is stamped out of one large sheet of aluminum—either perforated, textured or anodized—many things can be done to the surface. The chair in the second picture is shaped and turned out of one sheet of aluminum. I have been using a tremendous amount of aluminum in the last year or so, and people ask me, "Why? Is it the end of brass?" and all that sort of thing. People just don't really understand that we move around in new directions but we don't necessarily cast off the old. For instance, today in wood

finishes we have easily half a dozen to select from, whereas ten years ago we had one. Making the area of selection larger creates an opportunity for people to express more individuality. We have black metal, we have aluminum, we have brass, and we have many others that make the opportunity for selection much wider, and that's the way it should be.

Now, primarily, we design furniture as a background for people. I would say that in a few of our own settings seen in the slides we have shown no personality as far as people are concerned. This is the thing that the customer has to lend to the picture. We create the background, they have to give it its warmth, they have to add their own touches, which can be done in many, many different ways. We do not try to dictate the total picture, but we do definitely believe that the average person does not know what she wants. She can't possibly. She's not creative. And she needs all the help in the world. And she's been getting all the confusion in the world in the last ten years, so much confusion that many decide to take a trip to Europe instead of buying a sofa.

All other influences will come and go but will never be recorded in time as representing this day. Only this sort of thing—and the work of other designers who have done things similar to it—will remain as representative of now. This is the 1950s. Thank you very much. (Applause)

HAY: Thank you, Paul McCobb. You are going to have an opportunity to ask Mr. McCobb questions, and I am sure there are many questions buzzing in your minds, but we have decided this year in order to take the most pertinent questions, and questions that reflect the general query from the minds of the people, to have you divide into discussion groups. Decide among yourselves what questions you want asked, write these questions on a piece of paper and the group leaders who are on hand and are waiting for you, will pass the questions over to me. We will edit them and pick out the liveliest and most controversial questions and present them to Mr. Cobb at 11.45 . . . Would the group leaders bring their written questions to me before 11.45? There will be a gong sounded.

(DISCUSSION PERIOD)

HAY: I have to run through these things very quickly — there is, as you can imagine, a great common bond, a similarity of questions, and I'll ask Mr. McCobb to begin with the questions which seem to be coming out of almost every discussion group. Could I ask you to let him give his answer and we will go on to the next question for a series of, I don't quite know how many, but probably eight or ten questions. Then we'll throw it open to the floor at that point and you can come back to anything that you want to pick up that you think he hasn't answered satisfactorily, and you can attack him again.

The most common question, as you can probably imagine, is the evident worry

about the business of contemporary design and traditional design. I think this comes probably from the point of view of the manufacturer who has got a line in the works now and he doesn't want to have to cancel that because the retailer has a storeful of traditional furniture; and from the designer, perhaps, who is toying around with traditional ideas. Could you comment on the place of traditional design in market terms?

MCCOBB: Well, unfortunately, we can't just eliminate the traditional design program that is going on, and I think over a period of time that this should be in the back of the minds of many manufacturers in looking toward the future. Traditional design has been forced to change by our own times. It has become tremendously simplified. In many cases it has absolutely no relation to the period it came from. For instance, the television set that is Queen Anne, that has four cut-outs, Queen Anne legs — maybe out of this another design period might grow.

There is one thing that we should be tremendously aware of in traditional design, and I've been noticing this recently. Going to certain markets, the game of introducing traditional designs almost seems like going to the race track — manufacturers will come with a whole new group of designs, which is a great investment, and they expose this thing as if the market were a wheel of fortune. Will this catch on? Will it sell? What will happen? And they are not paying any attention whatsoever to the trend. No one individual nor one manufacturer is capable of having one basic idea and introducing it singly unless he wants to be the single pioneer that needs ten years to have this thing grow. He's got to watch the trend and the times. Now, for instance, just recently I was aware of this sort of thing happening, to give you an example. Three years ago the Spanish government invited two or three designers to go to Spain. The intention was to bring about a rebirth of interest in Spanish influence in furniture. Fabric design, the furniture group, and so on, accessories to go with it, were introduced to the market. But these had no relation with what was going on around the field nor with the normal growth or trends. This *had* to have a sad life. It lasted long enough to hit the stores and magazines and window displays, and that was the end of it. There is no background behind this whatsoever. No one paid any attention to what was going on, they just decided on Spanish this season — let's take a crack at it and see how it goes. Now this cost some manufacturers and some retailers an awful lot of money, to get involved in manufacturing and carrying stock and showing the furniture, and it only tended to confuse the public much more than before.

There was a very healthy trend in French Provincial, where they were simplifying some of their lines — in fact, it was getting to look very, very contemporary the way they were going. And then, right in the middle of it, the French Provincial was so good, and everyone was traveling to Italy — why not Italian Provincial? But, actually, there was no Italian Provincial, there was nothing for them to work from, and they made it up. Therefore it had no character whatso-

ever, and as I said before, Espresso Mahogany went down the drain and they had 50 percent mark-off sales in a big store in New York City about six months ago.

One has to be tremendously aware, not only in contemporary design, but also in traditional, just what the trends are. Trends need to be sponsored. One trend that lost the track was the return to Biedermeier. I don't know what happened here because they had some very simple lines and things that would fit into today's homes in the traditional area. One or two manufacturers introduced it but everyone pooh-poohed the whole thing and it went down the drain. This was one that should have been sponsored and should have been followed through. It was a new interest that could have fitted into this sort of transitional style that has to go on in order for us to break up what has been happening in the past. Without any question, the Provincial type of thing is much more suited to most of today's homes. You can see how many homes are being built today that can take Louis XIV or Victorian furniture. So manufacturers have to be very much aware of what is happening and they are being forced today to design transitional furniture—in other words, contemporary design with a touch of the period and the hardware on the legs. But, let's hope we don't do too much of that.

HAY: Another question that's come out of the groups in more or less the same way is this: In your talk you made no reference to the use of new materials—synthetics and that sort of thing—in making furniture. Why have people like Eames and Nelson, to some degree, been making more and doing more investigation in this kind of planning than you have? Why are you against synthetics?

MCCOBB: Well, it is not that I'm against synthetics at all—I am against the false use of synthetics. When using plastic I want it to look like it is plastic. I hate to have to be in a position where a plastic is used to substitute for the real thing. I happen to have a factory in Chicago that does a large business in upholstered furniture. They have machines and they have men and they have tools and they do not have plastic-forming devices. It is my problem to solve their problems. Mr. Eames does not design for an upholstery factory, he designed his chair for a plastic factory. Now, we have been working and experimenting in this area in woods, molded plywoods and plastics. It is only a matter of time before we find a proper solution from our point of view. Also, most the furniture made from synthetics has found its place much better in institutional use than in the home. The one thing that I have against some of the synthetic pieces is that they take on the appearance of being very inexpensive, but are not. In other words, a plastic molded chair basically should be inexpensive, and until this is solved properly they are not working in the right medium. I remember that the original Eames chair was shown in the Museum of Modern Art several years ago and the price tag on it was \$8. Now, this is very logical; this was good designing. But when the chair came on the market it cost \$50 and this was no longer the proper design approach. There are as many, and probably many more, great

chairs being developed in Italy today as there are on our side of the ocean, because in Italy they all work as individuals, they have no production whatsoever. To design a chair that would be made at the rate of ten a month, is in many cases, considered production. Therefore, there is a lot more experimental work going on in molded forms of wood, plastic and so on, and some very interesting examples. But in a lot of the projects we are working on right now, we have plastic and molded metals, castings, especially castings of metal, that will probably be out in the next year or so.

HAY: Several people seem curious to know whether you consider yourself a stylist or a designer. There is one question which bears specifically on this. It concerns your illustration of the living-wall and the similar one of the *Art Moderne* period, and your room-divider. Is this a style change on your part, or do you consider this a fundamental design—your own design, that is?

MCCOBB: Well, anyone who asked that question must be fairly ignorant. I mean, a stylist is a make-up artist. A designer is one who has to start from scratch, know what the problem is, know the factory that has to produce it, and know the public that wants to buy it. This is his medium and in this he produces what he thinks is his best solution. A stylist is a fellow who puts knobs on furniture or helps women put lipstick on, or in some cases designs automobiles. (Applause)

HAY: You can answer this question very quickly: What kind of a car do you drive?

MCCOBB: Jaguar. (Laughter)

HAY: Many questions bear on the business of the consumer . . . what she knows or what she thinks she knows. Several questioners have indicated that they feel that the real block is the manufacturer and the retailer, and not the consumer . . . that given an opportunity she has got much more savvy and much more sense than it was interpreted you gave her credit for.

MCCOBB: Well, maybe I made that statement in the wrong direction. The consumer is the one who is away ahead. The bottleneck starts with the manufacturer because he is the first one to produce the product. Now, the manufacturer's greatest bottleneck is the retailer—he's probably worse than the manufacturer except that the manufacturer has to start the ball rolling. The average woman cannot go out today and buy a Victorian refrigerator. Now, this was not something that she pre-determined—the manufacturer had to do it first and the retailer bought the only thing that existed, the only thing that was being manufactured for him. Some

day you want to take the time and go through a home and check off the number of items in this category—you will find that the home-furnishing industry, and in that you are backing down to the living room and dining room, is like a donkey in motion that no one can put the tail on. Manufacturers first of all have got to learn what contemporary design is, and this is merely learning their own business. Certainly, if you're an airplane manufacturer you can't reject the fact that jets are coming in and say, "Oh, that will be come and gone and we'll still be having the old motor." As an industrial design office we work in many other fields—we have worked on television, high-fidelity, building materials and hardware, and we see the way other manufacturers operate. There are two completely different worlds—and I'm talking about worlds involved with the same dollar, the dollar that is going into the home. The manufacturer of case goods and upholstery in the home-furnishings business is approximately 100 years behind in his thinking. Even though he may buy new machines and all that sort of thing, he's behind in his thinking as a merchandiser—he should not produce for the people an object that has been produced in the past. This is a no-growth kind of program. Why, when you look at the total of what is being purchased by the public today, the last thing in the world anyone should buy is a chair; there's no particular interest in chairs. Why? Well, there have been more interesting chairs designed than anything else, but I am talking about the picture in total. I think that probably the gentleman talking this afternoon about motivation will give you a lot of examples of what I mean.

If television did not bring people back into the house, Lord knows what would have happened. TV, at least, brought enough people into the living room to figure that they needed some new draperies and some new chairs to sit on, and we began to think some more. Think abstractly about your business—say five days to think about the product and two days to think about it abstractly—and compare your own business to the fellow down the street who has made toasters, roto-broilers, or refrigerators, or some of the other items that have gone into the home. This other fellow is laughing up his sleeve at the furniture industry because it will never corner the dollar market that the rest have. Of course, the whole thing is not based on dollar bills at all, because we in this industry have a much easier time of capturing people's emotions because we are talking basically about their home, their environment, where they want to live, and not their cellar or their kitchen or their playroom or their automobile. We are talking about their total way of life, so we have a great area of emotional content to work with.

HAY: Do you feel that the success of your furniture may have been based too much on promotion and too little on what you wanted to say in the original design? Has the promotion gone out of hand at all, or is your position unique in that you've been able to control it? I think this indicates that people are worried about the successful promotion of spurious things that get away from the fundamental designs.

MCCOBB: Well, I would say that a considerable amount of that happens. I have tried desperately to follow the program from the drawing board to the customer,

but suddenly someone in the small town decides he is going to buy an ad and I have no control over what he says . . . and some very bad things have been done. The ads don't tell the true story—in fact, many retailers don't even know what I am trying to say, therefore the message is not carried on properly to the customer. In the long run I've found out what a villainous role a retailer may sometimes play. I've also found the customer at the other end who knows what I am talking about, and she merely uses the retailer as an agent to buy the thing that I have designed. We find that this is happening more each day because we now have new retailers coming in that never even heard of my designs and don't know the first thing about them, but they have had 40 to 50 customers recently demanding that they have them. So, we've gotten over this hump. Now, I know and can appreciate retailers' problems—I have been around their stores and around retailers enough and I have actually had experience in retail stores—but I say what I say in spite of all this: the merchandising job can be done much better than it has been done. In fact, most retailers could get rid of 50 percent of the stock they have standing on the floor and occupying very good space and losing money for them.

HAY: How do you feel, perhaps from a philosophy-of-design point of view, about your relation to people like Finn Juhl or other Danish designers?

MCCOBB: Well, it's a mutual admiration society. About 12 of us can manage to get together around the world and talk about the same thing. We talk about people most often. We don't talk about design. We're in pursuit of one thing—the way people live. We want them to live better within their means. And we're taking the same amount of wood that everyone else is taking and we feel we can make a better looking thing out of it and a more pleasing thing to live with. Most of our conversations revolve around humanity, where it is going, the problems of education and communication, because we know that we understand each other's designs and approach, and we respect each man's way of saying things. So we have an international admiration society that can chat about the way human beings should really live.

HAY: I think that leads right into another question that came up in many of the discussion groups. Do you think there is a tendency for contemporary design to be all so much the same that it becomes quite sterile, and that we will be known in future years as a very stark and unemotional people?

MCCOBB: A statement like that is usually made by stark and unemotional people. (Laughter). You see, I have found out that people who say contemporary designs are very cold are used to living in traditional rooms that are very cold. They have no personality in themselves, and they don't have anything to add to their rooms.

Some of the most interesting interiors I have seen in contemporary design have warmth and feeling to them. This is up to the individual and his selection. Certainly, if someone puts together a room today of Venetian glass, some other Italian accessories, some of Finn Juhl's Danish furniture, some of the products coming out of Japan, and a few of my things, I hope, and put them all together in one setting, this has to have warmth . . . this is not a cold interior. Now, as far as the sameness is concerned . . . how do you establish a period without sameness? It has been the switching and the changing around and the crazy conversations of people asking what's new every six months that is confusing people. What did the roaring 20s look like? We know exactly what they looked like, and they didn't look Italian Provincial; they represented a period of time. Victorian was a period of time—very definitely, everyone added—it went all the way, completely. Now, it is true today that we are designing for many more people, but this is not where the harm comes. If everyone could copy everyone else and everything was in good taste, I think this would be a lovely world to look at. It's the bad things that are being copied and all the pseudoisms and the things on the side that are being done that scar up the face of this earth.

HAY: This will be the last question that I will direct to Mr. McCobb, and then we can turn the questions over to the floor. This again, is a question that came up in many of the discussion groups. It's the business of contemporary furniture being expensive, that often the kind of people who have the taste for contemporary haven't got the budget for it.

MCCOBB: Well, there is a portion of truth there. I would say it was truer ten years ago when some of the best contemporary was introduced in the top price bracket. But in the average store today good contemporary furniture is priced in the normal budget category. People who are trying to buy below those prices are in for trouble. These people who search for the very inexpensive have in actuality the most costly budget of all. There is, definitely, enough first-quality contemporary design on today's market for the average pocketbook, and I believe that there is some of it here in Canada—there may not be as much as in the United States, but there is the beginning of it and there is a tremendous reason and influence for it being here.

One of the things that I forgot to mention earlier is my background in designing. Actually, I studied painting and fine arts up until the early 20s and this was all that I did—painting, mural painting. Unfortunately, I picked a very nice time, the greatest in the country—we were on the WPA projects. So, I searched around for other work and became extremely interested in other media. I feel that a creative person can paint, write, design, do many things in the same area. At the school where I taught classes in Philadelphia, the Museum School, I tried to project the thought to my students that if they had both their hands cut off they could still be great artists, because it was what they thought of—it's all up in their

heads. Therefore, for a great many years of my life I never thought of the idea of tradition or the past. I studied my painting and my architecture because there were great creative men in the past who did that, and I had only one reason for being on earth, and that was to produce something that was my own message, whether it was in painting, furniture design, product design. We have to contribute something, some reason for being here, and I apply the same kind of thinking in my design as I would in my painting, and that is why I have very, very definite statements about why I do something. I do not fiddle around. I do it as I want to do it, and that is it—I'm on to my next project and I'm not living in an ivory tower doing it—I'm living every single day with people around me that are going to live with these designs and I've had enough exposure to the problems of selling merchandise to know how this has to be done. The painter who studies anatomy for ten years no longer has to worry about the way the body is constructed—he goes about and he paints. Picasso can take his freedom because of his background, and as designers, this is normally our approach, too. (Applause)

(QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR)

GERALD ANGLIN: I wonder if Mr. McCobb might tell us something of the problems he faced when he first introduced his line of furniture—there wasn't very much contemporary around at that time. What were the merchandising problems and how were they met?

MCCOBB: Well, another part of designing is a sense of timing. The first group that I designed that was nationally manufactured was presented at a very good time. In the first place, the customer was buying almost anything. And we had the opportunity of introducing a new approach just about the time when a great many people were waiting to see this sort of thing. Now, one thing we did to introduce our first group was design all the floor plans for the store layout of the display, all the decorating treatment. We wrote material for the salesmen to use—I even found words to put in their mouths to change other habit words that they had used in the past. I had to bring all sales personnel around to my thinking, and therefore I required a meeting as each store introduced the new things. Each one had a separate department and they could not get that particular group until they allotted a certain amount of floor space. Now, this was done because we had a story to tell, and it could not be told half-heartedly. We did not sell many big stores for this particular reason—they wouldn't give us the proper space and let us do the right things, and we knew it would not last. New design has to be presented properly and the story has to be told properly. It has not been told properly for ten years. We had to get over a tremendous chasm of ignorance, and we did it with the idea of working from the drawing board right to the customer. I would normally spend the first day in every store—and I mean a lot of small stores around the country—that introduced my first group of

furniture. This way I could talk to people and tell salesmen what I thought and give them what was then a pretty new picture for the public. It was not a new picture as far as designers were concerned, or people who knew what was going on, but it was new ten or twelve years ago. The first year of exposing this first group was quite a large project. I was in every state in the country, and I have no idea how many stores, how many thousands and thousands of people that I've talked to. And I enjoy talking to them because I am only interested in one thing—I want to see my design in their homes and I want them to know the reason they like my things.

W. D. TUCKER, *T. Eaton Co. Ltd.*: I notice a propensity, Mr. McCobb, to be slavishly confined to the straight line, and I'm just wondering if you've given any cognizance to Ruskin—"the curve is a line of beauty, the straight line can never survive." I'm hinting at a definition of beauty as being that which we desire. Would you comment on that, please?

MCCOBB: Well, this is all in the area of changing patterns and human nature. When we have too much of Mae West, we want to go back to straight lines. If you want to look back at some of the best designs of the past, in architecture as well as in interior design and furniture, you'll find that they hold closer to the straight line than the curved line. The straight line is restraint, and as you slowly change the straight line you add slightly to it, but the farther you get away from the straight line to the curved line, the more exaggerated you become. You then get all the way over to rococo; baroque, especially, is about as far as you can go in that direction. You will find that when the curved line went the farthest so did everyone's taste, and it almost reached a peak each time at a period of disaster, just before things sort of fell apart. In other words, people were living about as high as they could and the curve went about as far as it could, and the next thing the bottom fell out and we went back again to straight line. Now, this is human nature and this is the way things will always be—as long as the straight line is here today, the curved line is going to be here tomorrow, and if the curved line is here now, the straight line will be tomorrow, and we'll continue. Thank the Lord, I think, for every person in this room, that people are this way. Otherwise, we might as well close up all the stores and all the factories and go home. This is one of the most wonderful things—people cannot stand things after a certain period of time. They want change, and it's healthy, it's growth.

Now, we should give them in this change the best that we can. There probably has been in some of my designs of the past a large proportion of straight lines. The greatest architect in the world today designs in a linear fashion. Examples of Mies van der Rohe's have been shown throughout the world, and his work is of tremendous importance, but Mies van der Rohe won't be forever. He's of today, and right in the middle of his magnificent work on Park Avenue is the Gaudi show at the Museum of Modern Art, and everyone's getting very excited about it—we'll have pincurls on everything soon.

MAX WERNER, *Ryerson Institute of Technology*: If the cobbler chair had been made by Michelangelo, would you have asked the customer to have thrown it out?

MCCOBB: Whose chair?

WERNER: The cobbler's chair you mentioned in the beginning of your speech this morning. The cobbler's bench.

MCCOBB: That's kind of exaggerated. I mean, Michelangelo's paintings were what we were talking about; he was not known for his cobbler's benches.

WERNER: I'll simply phrase it in a different way. Because a Michelangelo painting is obviously worth a great deal of money, does that painting have any more right to be there in the room than the cobbler's bench?

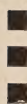
MCCOBB: Michelangelo's paintings are worth a great deal of money for only one thing—it's Michelangelo's work. The dollar value has nothing to do with the work. The painting was selected and retained and therefore its value in dollar bills grew. Now, this applies not only to Michelangelo's work. There are chairs, glass works, untold numbers of things from all the periods of the past that have been retained, most often best shown in museums. I was talking before about the pseudo attachments of sentimentality—that in the middle of a contemporary room a woman has to retain a cobbler's bench that she's making into a planter, and without this she won't feel secure—that gets a little ridiculous. She in turn resents it if I tell her to throw it out because it's old. But if she asks me about a Michelangelo, I would say she should keep it.

Things retained by the museums throughout the world have their value in our heritage, giving us a background for what we're going to do tomorrow. I sincerely believe in people holding on to things that give them pride in possession and which they are sentimentally attached to, so long as they are real, not just something that they've dreamed up. I can have a wonderful time talking to real antique dealers. I have been associated with the field, I know my way around in it quite a bit, I know what they search for, I know the value of the things they search for, we talk to each other on equal terms. But just as soon as you take any one of those products and make an imitation of it—start drilling fake worm holes—then it is a different thing, a completely different world we're talking about. And that's the part and the area that I am most against. And furthermore, we have to do something today so they have some antiques tomorrow. (Laughter) (Applause).

ROBIN BUSH, *Herman Miller Furniture Co.*: Mr. McCobb, what thoughts do you have on the problem of a designed object that should be relatively inexpensive when it reaches the consumer but is channeled through a series of steps that forces it to become economically pretty high? Do you think we should take some interesting new looks at merchandising and distribution methods of the contemporary products in a broadened scope?

MCCOBB: Very much so. I get involved in an awful lot of this. For instance, to give you an example, and to get away from the furniture industry, we're designing some textured glass—architectural glass. When it leaves the factory the glass is at a very moderate price—a rough figure is close to 30 cents a square foot—and in the past throughout the country the manufacturers had distributors in all towns who stocked the merchandise, and therefore could supply the customer within three or four days. Also, the distributor was the man who kept production going at the plant. He gave the glass to the installation man, and he had labor costs and cutting and waste. Now, in this particular area the distributor no longer stocks the merchandise: he sends his order in and he has the order sent directly to the laborer who is doing the job, and there's a 50 cent additional cost in there. So you can see how the price goes up. I have seen the price of glass go up tremendously, but the prices of the man who is producing it at the bottom have not gone up too high. I think maybe a lot of study should be given to the industry to see if there are ways and means of keeping prices in line. I know from experience that things are very tight for the retailer—his overheads are tremendous—but I think he may be losing his money with a lot of merchandise on which he has to take very low mark-downs; and there is servicing and other things. Someone should do a tremendous amount of study on this subject. I could see one day an airplane factory that had no more orders deciding that the price of furniture is ridiculous and that they are going to put their machines to work. They might upset the whole applecart.

HAY: I think that had better be all for now. Thank you very much, Paul, for answering the questions so well and so fully and with such obvious meaning and sincerity.



■ Luncheon was held in the Print Room of the Art Gallery. Col. Alain, chairman of the conference, was the first speaker

ALAIN: To our next guest we must say a special word of thanks as well as of welcome for we are particularly indebted today to the Art Gallery of Toronto for turning its entire premises over to us for what is certainly the most stimulating setting such a conference could have. (Applause). Immediately after lunch there's going to be some free time in which you may all enjoy the exhibitions currently on display. I would like to take this opportunity of expressing the thanks of everyone here to the Director of the Gallery, Mr. Martin Baldwin, who has kindly joined us for lunch, and who is going to introduce the speaker . . . Mr. Baldwin. (Applause)

BALDWIN: Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, first I would like to say that we were delighted when Jerry Anglin came along and suggested that this would be a good place to have you people meet; I hope you've been comfortable. After we'd arranged to have you here, Churchill said he'd come, too, so we had to make some changes in the arrangements, because we thought you'd be overrun rather more than usual if we left you in the galleries. I hope that the little, what I call practice sessions, going on all over the place, laid a lot of fruitful eggs. Now, my job here is not to give you a long description about Cleeve Horne, but simply to tell you the more disreputable parts of his career. But, he, of course, starts out by being born in the wrong place . . . I was going to say he was born in stone, bronze and cement, but that's the next item. He was born in Jamaica. He studied under Dorothy Dick, whom I don't remember at all. He is a painter

of portraits and landscapes and a sculptor in stone . . . oh, we had that bit, didn't we? However, Cleeve has been a very good friend and antagonist of mine on a great many committees and arguments around this art gallery, and we respect each other's ability. Today, he is going to do the main speech, so I'd better not usurp all this time, but simply continue by saying this, that he has in his sculpture done the Osgoode Hall War Memorial, he has painted Alexander Graham Bell, and one of his first and most interesting pictures was a portrait of Dr. R. I. Harris. He has been continually painting distinguished pictures of distinguished people, and he can even make a distinguished picture out of undistinguished people. Finally, there's a reason for this—it is the same reason that explains Mr. McCobb—his wife also paints and designs. Finally—I have more finals than anything today—he was one of the guiding spirits in the decoration and interior furnishing of the Imperial Oil Building. And with that very long introduction, I have a great deal of pleasure in presenting to you, Mr. Cleeve Horne, past president of the Ontario Society of Artists and now member of the Royal Canadian Academy. (Applause)

HORNE: Mr. Chairman and my very close and now intimate friend, Mr. Baldwin, and honored guests. Frankly I don't know why I am here. From the very beginning when it was suggested that I speak at this luncheon, I endeavored to explain that actually you are designers pure and simple and manufacturers in a profession which I am not related to at all. It was suggested that I should try and speak on something relative to designers as people. Now, I could quite easily have closed off, and I think we should do it very soon, by simply saying that designers *are* people, instead of the other way around. But, I know you've had a busy morning, and you are going to have a busy afternoon. I have just been advised that you are going to have some free time—I don't necessarily believe in this business of interrupting the only free time which you have now, with coffee and a cigarette with your friends. Being a foreigner to the subject suggested makes the whole question rather esoteric. I'm supposed to be saying that a designer or creator or an artist is mad or intelligent. I have always believed, to some degree, in Emerson's thought that to be great is to be misunderstood and probably today I'll be able to fill the latter stage of it by being misunderstood, in the hopes that the other will take care of itself. But the public judgment, as you know, gentlemen, about designers, about artists, sculptors, painters and musicians, writers, indeed architects, does fall in a rather strange category, and I think the basic reason is that they are individuals. As individuals we must give them some credit, which I think I can explain easier by discussing this gallery in which you are attending lunch.

The Art Gallery of Toronto, like all other art galleries throughout the world, really serves two purposes. One, as a museum, it shows off what has been created in the past, and also, and a very important phase it is, it shows art that is being created by our present-day painters and sculptors. I don't know if you realize, but you can trace back everything that has been done in design, advertising art and so on, back to your art gallery. Thus the art gallery has become a sort of a testing ground . . . a testing ground of the most creative thinkers in fine art

today. These men who create within the walls of their own studio or garret, are given a public showing of what they are feeling and thinking about us. They are permitted to think freely, speak freely in terms of the visual arts. When the public sees these things on the walls, you have controversies developing, which are inevitable and always healthy. But the public does see these experiments in design (for they are, basically, wrapped around a thing called design) but these designs say certain things about shape, color and form that have never been known by the public before. And then you find your industrial designer, you designers, your advertising personnel, beginning to see the light. They observe certain things in certain works of art that might be interesting in advertising, might be interesting, perhaps, in industrial design thinking. And because the public also is exposed to these things you find that the client becomes a little softer touch for progress and taste. It begins here in the art gallery . . . it's picked up by another group of creators, and finally, the public sees it in newspapers, magazines and in shapes and things that they normally use. I am spending this amount of time on the art gallery because I do believe it is terribly important. The gallery's function really is a sort of research and testing building for what you people in this room are endeavoring to do. It's a sort of in-between stage where the public can see the ultimate, which may be mad in their opinion, and yet it gives the designer a chance to squeeze some of that madness in his own work.

Now, this business of freedom and individuality seems to me to be a little disturbing today. Paradoxically, it means that the freedom we are having in Canada is eventually going to drive out our freedom in the true sense of the word. You find that the individual is gradually being absorbed and disappearing off the face of the earth, off the face of Canada. Let us take, for example, automobiles today . . . the American car. In size, shape, maybe in the automotive engineering under the hood, different models are getting to be more and more the same. Prices vary, small cars become big, and so on, and the bigger cars are beginning to turn smaller. The manufacturers have a tendency to push everything into a mold, into one mold. Standardization is terribly important economically, and it is a question which can be debated at great length, but, what actually is happening is that we are believing too much, I think, in the so-called taste of the public. The union forces and the pollsters to me are the ones that are creating the trouble. Is there really such a thing as *the people*, the people's taste, or the public's taste? I don't think there is . . . there ain't such an animal actually.

Now, economically, of course, you say mass production is sounder, but the point is that I am very grateful to be able to tell you that I've observed—as many of you obviously have, because it is your profession—but I have personally observed that there are a number of small cabinet shops rising up all around Toronto, many of them run by people from Europe. These shops are small enough to take designs and do something with them for a personal job, and very reasonably. This sort of personal thing is still existing, I suppose, but for how long, I don't know, because once they become successful, they, too, want to be a great manufacturer and create great things, and great quantities of things. But there is another sign that we will not allow ourselves to become sort of a standard

consumer. You notice the foreign cars beginning to appear on the road . . . that makes the highways a little more interesting, too. I suppose what will happen eventually is that the Big Three car makers will have to take stock shortly and their P.R. men will decide that the public's taste is leaning in this direction and then there'll be some sort of a compromise and we'll have all sorts of foreign cars and the same kind of thing here. Everything leads toward standardization. But this is where your designer, this berserk individual, as you call him, is so valuable, and it's proved so in Europe.

But at this stage I'd like to interject a very personal note. Since I am not a designer, nor have I any relationship to this organization, I can speak quite freely. My wife and I are endeavoring to build a small house out in the country, sort of a hyperbolic paraboloid . . . you know what that means, you people—it is not a rude term. It's sort of an engineering thing, and naturally we are interested in acquiring certain pieces of furniture that will be part of and will grow with this particular type of engineering development. Mind you, things are a bit expensive, but we cast cost aside just out of the interest of the problem. In the last year I have been endeavoring to find one comfortable lounge chair, with a capital C for comfort. About a year ago I found one chair that I thought was a beginning of some indication of classic contemporary, and that was Saarinen's womb chair which in itself is very attractive to look at. It turned out to be very comfortable. I've had it now for a year and I sat in it for about a week trying to use it for a lounge chair over a period of ten minutes of sitting, reading and perhaps even resting. It is now in another part of the house where it looks fine, like a piece of sculpture sitting there all by itself, and it is not used at all. I think perhaps the problem again is the behavior of public taste, which the poor designers have to follow through on.

Here I am stepping on everybody's toes, but I have devised for my own use a sort of yardstick over the years which I call the C.D.C. of gracious living as far as we're concerned. The first is Comfort, the second is Design and the third is Cost, and in that order. Design is really impractical and of no particular use unless it has some comfort. The cost, I think, is terribly important and has a direct bearing on me, too. In fact, the way cost of furniture is going at the moment I would suggest that the younger generation who are leaving university and getting married might start moving back to the original Arab custom of no furniture and only pouffs and cushions; frankly it's a very comfortable operation. I have been in some of these palaces in Fez, I have been entertained there — enormous places with just a few of these articles that I mentioned spotted around the walls. I was very, very comfortable and thoroughly enjoyed myself, even though there was the added thought that upstairs there were nine wives to be brought to your side by the clap of a hand, as it were, which is another Arab custom. But, nevertheless, the fact is they do not use furniture and have not for 2,000 years, and they certainly have a very hospitable way of entertaining. In other words, we are going back to the floor.

Now, there is only one alternative to that at the moment but I have not seriously considered this, but is there any reason why we must have furniture

looking very clean and very practical? I think the type of furniture that is being designed today—and here I am going right out on a limb—the over-all patterns seem to be designed for streetcars or subways. The sensation you have when you sit in a chair today is that you are not going to stay there more than ten minutes anyway—which is fine for an office. The thing that I heartily dislike is that gentle embarrassing sort of kick in the pants as you rise—the thing follows you immediately. This is the sort of thing that looks well but basically is not comfortable. In other words, we are designing for man to conform—I think it should be the other way round. Surely, when you get into a chair there should be some versatility in the chair's shape or its pillows or this loose cushion business that you can fit your own anatomy to. I'm only casting this in because I think the Arab angle might be an interesting thought to you people as a relief from your problem of furniture.

One other thing which I think is great today—it's certainly an advantage for painters and sculptors and probably one of the most extraordinary situations ever developed in the history of the world—and that is that we have now become, as a public, completely shockproof. I don't think any of you would be the slightest bit disturbed if tomorrow you read in the newspapers that the Russians had landed a man on Mars. You'd read it and you'd say, well, it's been done, and then read something about a new car or some advertisement or some latest local news about somebody you may or may not know—in other words it just rolls off your back. I don't think Mr. Baldwin here could put on an art exhibition that would shock the public any more. The feeling of even 35 or 40 years ago is gone. The poor group of Seven were not really modern at their time, because France was away ahead of them, but the public really got up on their high horse and did something about it. But today, anything we do the public accepts. Well, that's the sort of thing that's going on today. That means that at least you have an opportunity, if you have the capital, of course, to experiment in your line, not with the idea of shocking the public, but to get away from the standardization of all things, because you have a receptive public or perhaps it's only because they're very dull.

Then, you come to your Made-In-Canada business, which has been very obvious lately to me, a feeling that Canada is considered rather an important country in the world today, and the sad part of it is that we produce a fair amount but we actually do not design anything to speak of at all. We sort of survive on our influence from foreign sources.

Now, whether you believe in nationalism or not doesn't matter, but the only way, I think, that one can possibly feel the pulse of the country or develop the personality of the country is actually by giving some encouragement to your designers and to your artists. They're the ones that begin the thought, they are the ones that are the so-called screwballs that have an inventive mind. That's their business. They didn't want to go into it, they just had to do it, and that is actually the basic truth behind a good thing. These things in this room may look like a group of works by four men, which they are. But say there are 30 paintings in this room—then there are 30 actual inventions in this room—each work is an invention. An artist cannot repeat himself. That's where your odd artist who

is not a designer, who often becomes a designer afterwards, can be awfully useful. You want an inventor—that's the only way in which we can hope for any progress, I think, in finding out what Canada really has to offer the rest of the world.

So, may I close by simply saying, could we not take courage, have a little foresight, which takes money—and damn it all, Canada is supposed to have a lot of that—and, perhaps have some faith in our Canadian creators and designers? Thank you very much. (Applause)

ALAIN: The attentive listening of your audience, Mr. Horne, is a good expression of how we all have appreciated your talk, and I thank you. Following this lunch you will have some free time and I would invite you to visit the gallery of the building and you are especially invited to enjoy the paintings in the gallery, those of that noted designer of empires, Sir Winston Churchill. You will also be very interested in studying the exhibition of good design in furniture and furnishings available in Canada, arranged especially for this conference in the centre of the gallery. Thank you. (Applause)

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The Afternoon Session convened at 2.30 p.m., with Moderator Gerald Anglin starting proceedings

GERALD ANGLIN, *Editor, Canadian Homes and Gardens*: Ladies and gentlemen: It sometimes seems to me I have spent the best years of my life standing in bafflement before magazine stands trying to figure out what makes people buy one magazine instead of another. I recall several years ago when I was working for another publication, I watched a woman buy a magazine in a supermarket. With her bundle-buggy full of groceries and junior toddling behind, she paused at the magazine display en route to the cashier's desk. First she picked up one magazine and looked it over almost from cover to cover. Then she picked up a second, glanced at it briefly while reaching for a third, which seemed for a moment to fascinate her. Then suddenly she threw them down, and without so much as a glance at the cover grabbed up a copy of *Canadian Homes and Gardens*, yelled for junior and headed home.

At the time, the end result depressed me. Now it would cheer me—but it would still baffle me. And I am sure there is not a person who has registered for today's conference who was not driven here at least partly in search of a solution to this same mystery as it applies to furniture—and it certainly does.

We are going to try and help you in two ways this afternoon. First, we are going to let you hear the voices of four of these strange and mysterious people—the people who buy furniture—as they talk about furniture. Then we are going to turn you over to a man who is going to tell you whether people really mean what they say when they talk about furniture. He is a man who has spent a great deal of time and research in finding out what furniture—and other merchandise—really means to people.

Mr. Irving Gilman is a psychologist with degrees from both Columbia and New York Universities, who has been an executive with the *New York Times*, a

member of the National War Labor Board in Washington, and after the war, director of the sales promotion and creative departments for the LaSalle Companies. In 1952 he joined Dr. Ernest Dichter, a pioneer in the field of motivational research as an aid to product design and merchandising. He is today vice-president of Dr. Dichter's Institute for Motivational Research at Croton-on-Hudson . . . and I will leave it to Mr. Gilman to tell you himself, in a few minutes, just what motivational research is. Right now, however, I'll ask Mr. Gilman just to stand a moment so we can see who he is . . . Thank you.

Now—we do a lot of talking at these conferences, about the people who buy—or don't buy—furniture. So for a few minutes, let's give the people a chance to talk about furniture, while we relax, sit back and listen. This is a tape recording, greatly condensed, of an informal chat which my associate, Frank Moritsugu, and myself recently enjoyed with four young Toronto housewives. They are introduced to you on the white sheet you were given as you came upstairs. First you will hear from . . .

Mrs. Brown, who has been married 17 years, has one son, 13. Her husband is a TCA captain. After marriage the Browns lived in three apartments before getting into a house. Ten years ago this spring they bought a new, two-story, centre-hall style house, built of red brick with white clapboard facing, in a miniature bit of New Suburbia tucked into a corner of the old town of Weston.

Mrs. Black has been married nearly seven years and has two children. Her husband is a salesman. They lived at first in an apartment but a little over three years ago they moved into their first home, a bungalow in Don Mills.

Mrs. Smith has been married three and a half years and has no children. Her husband is a doctor in training and will graduate next year. For this reason Mrs. Smith and her husband live with her mother in a house in North Toronto and Mrs. Smith is so far an example of that modern phenomenon, the working wife.

Mrs. Green has been married to a chartered accountant for three years and has a baby daughter. They live in an apartment in Central Toronto.

TAPE RECORDING

ANGLIN: Well, Mrs. Green, would you reminisce a little about the sort of furniture that you remember as a child in your home? Where was your home and what was it like, and what sort of furniture do you remember?

MRS. GREEN: My home was in western Canada, in Medicine Hat, and the furniture was, I suppose, Late Victorian . . . some antiques, some sort of generally modern chintz-covered pieces. More or less a hodge-podge with an over-all color scheme. I grew up in a small town in a sort of large frame house.

ANGLIN: Do you remember as a small youngster any furniture that sticks in your memory, that you liked or didn't like?

MRS. GREEN: Well, there were several pieces which I liked very much as a child. I like modern furniture now, and particularly the Scandinavian furniture and so, therefore, the pieces which my mother prized, such as a rosewood Chinese table which was her pride and joy . . . and, oh, several antique pieces and rugs that she loved—none of them appeal to me now because they wouldn't go into my plans at all.

MORITSUGU: Did you like them then?

MRS. GREEN: I liked them as a child. I feel when you are growing up at home you like your home, and I still love going back there and it's perfectly comfortable and the pieces in themselves are attractive. They are not the terribly ornate type of Victorian furniture.

ANGLIN: It is very interesting how our ideas do change. Mrs. Brown, what do you recall when you were a child? Did you have a grandfather's or grandmother's home, to go back a generation farther? Do you remember anything about their furniture?

MRS. BROWN: It was in a farm community, and it was furnished with the antique type of thing, but with this formal parlor-living-room affair which no one ever got into. But the rest of the place was a jumble of what we call antique furniture, but always very homey and warm. Of course, the kitchen is what I remember because in my grandparents' home it was large and there was the sofa and the usual large chairs . . . a get-together room.

ANGLIN: Mrs. Black, what do you remember of your parents' home when you were very young? What was it like and what was the furniture like?

MRS. BLACK: Well, the piece of furniture that comes to mind was a huge overstuffed chair into which at least two children and sometimes three could crowd and read and look at books. That was lots of fun.

ANGLIN: Do you have a chair like this in your home now?

MRS. BLACK: We have a chesterfield which serves the purpose. My husband is six feet tall and with two boys romping they take up the whole chesterfield. Other than that the furniture was more or less nondescript. We had a piano in

the living room. That was about the largest piece of furniture there. The home was not large.

ANGLIN: Do you recall the home as being crowded with furniture?

MRS. BLACK: Compared with today's standards, yes. Except for the kitchen where there was lots of room to move around.

ANGLIN: Mrs. Smith, what about the furniture in your home?

MRS. SMITH: I really don't have to go back because I am still living there. Through the years there have been changes made. In fact, just recently we had some of our upholstered chairs made smaller and re-upholstered, and we have taken out some of the largest pieces of furniture and given the rooms more space.

MORITSUGU: What did you take out?

MRS. SMITH: The piano. And, so now the living room seems to be a lot wider really than it actually is. It has always been a very, very comfortable room and no great worries about not sitting on this chair or that chair . . . it has always been a very comfortable, warm room. We have one piece of furniture that will always stand out in my memory . . . it's a prayer chair, over 100 years old now and very uncomfortable to sit in, but it is a very unusual piece of furniture. It had, until recently, the original needlepoint strip down the middle and we've had the outside done over and then we finally had to get a new needlepoint centre. But, that was the centre of our room and I will always remember that. It is called a prayer chair, and everyone always remarks on it when they come in the room, favorably or unfavorably.

ANGLIN: You say it is uncomfortable?

MRS. SMITH: Oh, terribly!

ANGLIN: But you can't part with it?

MRS. SMITH: No. There are some people that it fits and they are very comfortable in it. In fact, I remember our minister, who was a very tall man . . . he used to love to sit in that chair, and I couldn't imagine why.

MORITSUGU: Perhaps he is a stiff, unyielding man. (LAUGHTER)

ANGLIN: Well, Mrs. Smith, you have bought some furniture yourself, have you?

MRS. SMITH: Yes.

ANGLIN: What have you bought and what sort of furniture?

MRS. SMITH: Well, we bought a bedroom suite, and we bought a davenport because we were in a two-room apartment—three rooms actually—and we wanted some place for people to sleep when they came over to visit us. We didn't want to go to any great expense so we didn't get the pull-out mattress type, we got a davenport. And a console table and coffee table.

ANGLIN: Because your husband is at college you won't be setting up house-keeping on your own and you will be living at home for awhile, so you have put off buying more furniture, but do you see that your ideas have changed at all during this waiting period? Supposing tomorrow you were going to have to go and furnish a new home or apartment, what kind of furniture would you buy?

MRS. SMITH: Well, I can say that we have learned some valuable lessons in the purchases that we did make. First of all I wouldn't get any more light-colored furniture. Our bedroom suite was in the current fashion at the time—limed oak—and we are very tired of it. It seems to have gone streaky, whereas the dark furniture that we bought for the living room is still good—you can polish it up and it looks just as nice as when we got it. But, the light furniture we have grown very tired of. Another thing that I learned is that we must get something in a particular style or period. We were cutting down again, and we only bought a double dresser and a bed, and we were using an old chest of drawers. Well, we decided we would like to get a chest of drawers to go with the suite, and of course, we couldn't get it. If we had bought a particular style or period it wouldn't matter, you could go down and get it and it would go with the furniture. I think that's a mistake I won't make when I go to buy furniture again.

ANGLIN: You would approve of the trend now toward producing what some manufacturers call correlated furniture, so that you can go on adding to it?

MRS. SMITH: Yes. So when you add, it won't just be a hodge-podge. You'll

have some sort of pattern. Maybe it won't be exactly matching, but you won't care as long as it's in the same style. As for the particular type, I'm still not decided. The contemporary Scandinavian looks very nice, and I think the French Provincial . . . but I'm really open to suggestions at this point. And I do like the Canadian Colonial. If we have that type of a home I would rather like that. It certainly looks very comfortable. Of course, there are a lot of things to consider . . . what type of entertaining you will be doing and your type of house. I'm really not completely decided yet.

ANGLIN: Mrs. Black, you moved from an apartment to a home in the suburbs which is quite a current modern trend affecting a lot of people. What did this mean? Did you have to buy more furniture, and what did you buy?

MRS. BLACK: Well, we bought some baby furniture, but other than that we bought a Scandinavian dining room table and chairs. I am very fond of them. And we bought some unfinished bookcases and painted them to match the study, and we bought a lounge and a swivel chair for the study as well.

ANGLIN: Did the furniture you bought for your house, since you moved into a house, vary very much from the sort of furniture, the style you bought when you were first married?

MRS. BLACK: Yes. The Scandinavian, of course, is completely contemporary. The living-room furniture that we bought was . . . well, not contemporary but not really period either.

ANGLIN: Is this what you bought when you were first married?

MRS. BLACK: Yes. And, we, too, did what Mrs. Smith did . . . bought a bed and a chest of drawers, a double dresser for the bedroom and we, too, have run into the problem of not being able to match night tables and that type of thing. But I don't know that I particularly want night tables. I rather like the idea of night tables attached to a headboard, and since we have a continental bed without either headboard or footboard, I would like to see a piece that can be bought — just a headboard with night tables attached to it, and no legs so that the dusting and mopping problem is easier.

ANGLIN: You would like this to hitch onto the bed or to hitch onto the wall?

MRS. BLACK: Hitch onto the bed, because then you could move it around. I have

discovered that although furniture can be moved around in a room, there usually is one best place for it, and if you intend to stay in a house then you don't mind attaching things to the wall and having built-ins, but if you intend to move around, of course, you have to think of the possibility of having to move these and take them with you.

ANGLIN: Mrs. Brown, how do you do your furniture shopping? When did you last buy some more or less major item of furniture?

MRS. BROWN: About a year and a half ago.

ANGLIN: And what did you buy?

MRS. BROWN: I think that was the television set, which was a big item to fit in with the other pieces that we had purchased.

ANGLIN: And a television set is definitely a piece of furniture and it raises a problem of fitting in. Before the television set, what did you buy in the line of a chair or sofa or table? And how did you go about buying it?

MRS. BROWN: Well, we bought a couple of antique chairs. I had wanted these things, they were the type of thing I felt would fit in with our room, and we just shopped around . . . I shopped around until I found something that I thought was suitable and when my husband went with me and he agreed that he thought they would be very nice. He wasn't too sure, but he thought they would fit in.

ANGLIN: You bought these in an antique store?

MRS. BROWN: Yes. And had them refinished. Having made a good many mistakes when we were first married, you get to the point where you do a great deal of thinking before you buy. You don't want to spend your life throwing out furniture and buying new things, so you want to get something that is going to go with the personalities of the people that live in a home, and I think that includes the children as well as the husband or anyone else that lives with you. And then you have something constructive to work on from there. There isn't too much variety in the particular things that I like.

ANGLIN: You've been married 17 years. How much furniture did you have to

buy when you were first married and how much of it have you replaced just because you didn't like it any more? And, how long was it before you started?

MRS. BROWN: We've replaced everything. Of course, at that time, toward the end of the depression, money was the biggest consideration. We had to start with something to sit on and something to eat off, so that we couldn't afford to do what we had wanted. Actually, I don't think I would have been prepared for it anyway. And, when you get to the point where you want to make up your mind about furniture that you will be happy to live with for the next, I assume, 20 years, and maybe 30 years . . . I think you give it a good deal of thought. You realize that it is going to cost you money and that even if you have to buy one piece at a time it is well worthwhile, because then you are happy with the pieces that you have, and every day you don't wonder why you bought them.

ANGLIN: About how long was it after you were married before this replacing period started?

MRS. BROWN: That would only be within the last nine years, after we bought our house, because before that we owned very little furniture. We had to come out of an apartment. I really hadn't, for one reason or another, given it too much thought. I suppose the main reason was that I couldn't afford what I wanted anyway, but I was willing to wait for what I thought was nice.

ANGLIN: How would you describe what you liked when you were first married and what you like now?

MRS. BROWN: Well, as I remember, had I been able to go and buy what I wanted when I was first married I would have gone in for the bleached mahogany furniture, which attracted me very much. Probably because the home I came out of was all dark woods and a sort of a mumbo jumbo of things. Now I have changed around for some reason or other. Bleached mahogany isn't compatible with my personality or my husband's so that we prefer this more traditional French Provincial type of thing and the warmer woods. We are very fond of mahogany.

ANGLIN: Mrs. Brown, do you know where the furniture you bought, when you started replacing your furniture, was made? I am not speaking now of the antiques but the more recently manufactured furniture?

MRS. BROWN: Well, some of it is Drexel, which is made in Grand Rapids, I

believe, and some of it is Electrohome, which is up in Kitchener, isn't it? Deilcraft . . .

ANGLIN: Boy, the manufacturers will love you! They worry about whether anybody—unless they like something and go and buy something as distinct as an antique or, on the other hand, Scandinavian — is aware of who makes the furniture.

MRS. BROWN: I think that's very important. I think the maker's name is one of your best guarantees of quality.

ANGLIN: More so than furniture stores?

MRS. BROWN: Well, a reputable firm will stand behind it, there is no doubt about that.

ANGLIN: You haven't bought so much furniture yet, Mrs. Smith, but are you conscious of furniture manufacturers? In the furniture you did buy when you were first married and moved into an apartment . . . the bedroom furniture, and so on, do you know who made it?

MRS. SMITH: I did know when I bought it. I believe it was either Hanover or one of these Northern Ontario furniture centres. I've forgotten the exact name now. I am certainly aware of certain names in furniture and certain ones come to mind. I think the store is important. I think you should deal with a reputable store.

ANGLIN: Are the stores helpful when you go shopping? Have you got the feeling that the people you are dealing with know their furniture?

MRS. SMITH: We bought our furniture in a great rush and I feel often that we should have taken more care than we did. Some of our furniture now, I think, is going to end up in my husband's waiting room. (Laughter)

ANGLIN: Mrs. Green, you bought some Scandinavian furniture—do you know the name of the designer of any given piece?

MRS. SMITH: I can't think of the name of the Danish designer who is so famous

who was here about a year ago. We have just got a few pieces of Scandinavian. I don't think that we have any of his. Frankly, I don't know who designed it.

ANGLIN: You don't actually know. You know they are . . .

MRS. SMITH: I don't actually know. I know they are Danish . . . rather Swedish, and I don't know anything other than that.

ANGLIN: Mrs. Black, you bought some Scandinavian furniture . . .

MRS. BLACK: I don't know the name of the designer.

ANGLIN: Have you any furniture in your home the designer of which you do know, by name?

MRS. BLACK: No.

MORITSUGU: Or manufacturer?

MRS. BLACK: Gibbard.

MORITSUGU: How did you know the name of the manufacturer?

MRS. BLACK: How did I become familiar with Gibbard? Through magazines, and then when I went shopping I looked for a tag.

MORITSUGU: Magazine advertising is what you are getting at then?

MRS. BLACK: Yes.

MORITSUGU: Have you, in your shopping, run into cases where there has not been any identification on the piece, and if so, has this bothered you at all, or were you going for a very special thing?

MRS. BLACK: No. I do look for tags, and I appreciate it if they are there, because then you know who did it; and if you have heard of them before, and read of it before, then, you have an idea of where you are.

MORITSUGU: So it is important to you.

MRS. BLACK: I think so . . . yes.

ANGLIN: Mrs. Brown, when you go to buy furniture, there are various considerations. What do you think are the most important . . . price, style, durability, the name of the manufacturer, or the designer's name? Or just plain usefulness of the furniture article?

MRS. BROWN: I put great stock in the reputable manufacturer's name, the fact that he has, for a good many years, built quality furniture. I think that's important. The price, of course, within reason, always has a part to play, but I feel very strongly that I would prefer to wait for another six months or a year, if I had to to get what I want. Certainly furniture must conform with the things you have and be pleasant for your family to live with—that is important, too. But I won't buy anything that the manufacturer is, as I feel, ashamed to put his name on.

(END OF TAPE RECORDING)

GILMAN: Ladies and gentlemen: Before I start talking to you about furniture, I'd like to tell you of an incident concerning a young mother and her two children. She tucked them into bed one night, then went into her own room to give herself a beauty treatment—she put up her hair in pin curls and applied a mud pack to her face. Then the children started to kick up a rumpus, and she went in to see them, with her hair in curlers and mud on her face. As she was leaving the room after scolding them and getting them back to bed, she overheard the youngest child say to her older sister, "Who was that?"

It's been our experience that the same kind of non-recognition of a very familiar object exists between the furniture manufacturers, his advertising, his sales outlets and the customer he seeks to communicate with. You think you know each other so well yet you don't recognize the other when you see him, and if you permit me, that's going to be the topic of my sermon this afternoon.

There is a need to discover correct and successful new techniques, both in designing and in the selling of furniture. If you permit me to be so blunt and arrogant as to be a guest in your house and say that your techniques and methods are antiquated and old-fashioned, I will do so; if you don't permit me to say so,

I will do so nevertheless. And, I think there is a need to discover first of all the full meaning and significance of the purchase which the customer is making. There is all too often a tendency of all of us, and I include myself, to expertize too frequently on the basis of our own intuition, on the basis of our own experience, and thus to transfer to an entire society or a segment of that society our own analysis and interpretation of that limited experience and that dubious intuition and then to project our own likes and dislikes onto the consumer. This exists from the very creative individual in the industry—the designer—who at times is not very creative, to the retailer who may be creative or not. You try to draw from the universe which is yourself, or from a limited group of universes which are people like yourself, but it is difficult for the human being to extend his horizons, and this is why motivational research, we believe, is important. Because, it is a new scientific device utilizing established techniques developed in the social sciences in the academic life of the university and college, sharpened to meet the needs of present industry and business, taken out of the seminar and put into the supermarket for the purpose of establishing communication with the consumer; for the purposes of opening the channels of communications which have been atrophied through the years; for the purposes of understanding the changing needs of a society and the people who are part of that society. If there is anything that we are sure of in the social sciences it is that change does not change; it is unending. It is continually in process, it is the one constant that we can be sure of, and the dramatic change that we suddenly wonder about should not surprise us. Why has Swedish Modern become popular or unpopular? It seems only overnight, but the roots for those changes have been growing for many years—the seeds may have been planted a decade or more ago, they may have been the result of a social upheaval, a political change, all of which tend to influence the factors in our society. And therefore motivational research is an attempt to find out what people think.

Now, it is difficult to find out what people think because our society puts a premium on honesty. We have certain value systems. For example, prestige and social status are extremely important. Being rational and intelligent, appearing logical and sane to our auditors are extremely important. Therefore, when research is done which asks questions logically and intelligently and rationally, we are apt to get a good deal of information which is logical, rational and intelligent, but which is not the truth about how people feel. When I am asked a question I have a responsibility to my own self-interest to try to appear as intelligent as possible to the person asking the question, and so I look around for an answer, but more important, I look around for something that would enhance my status, flatter my ego, make me appear worldly, knowledgeable, intelligent, smart, beautiful, young and happy. And therefore when you accumulate such information by the bushel you have what we would call “so-what research.”

So what are you going to do about it? You know how many people have bought or not bought, but what is lacking is *why* did they buy or why did they not buy? What were the motivating factors behind their decision-making process? And it is to this that motivational research addresses itself, dealing with the

conscious and the subconscious factors that come into play in every buying decision. It's what we call "Rehearsal for Purchase." It goes on all the time, from "I'm just looking around," "I don't know what I want," "I'm window shopping," and so on. But what we are saying is that we are rehearsing the purchase act, we are researching for ourselves how to arrive at a sound decision.

Take a young couple engaged in the momentous mission of furnishing their home. They're eager to select their bedroom and dining room furniture or simply a few necessary items. They wend their way to a shopping centre, department store, retail or specialty shop. There is excitement about them, there's pleasurable anticipation—inevitably something happens. The girl turns out to like one thing and the boy likes something else. They may react differently to colors, they may disagree on styles, one may like comfort and the other may have a secret desire for something sterner, more puritanical. However much they may love one another they've got a problem and before they know it they are enmeshed in a quarrel. How often has the retailer been the participant in a situation that goes like this: "But, darling, you know that won't go well with whatever it won't go well with" . . . or the wife saying, "I don't know, John, you're just color blind!" And, this is repeated again and again in every buying situation. Well, to solve their problem this couple must perform a miracle, they must fuse personalities. The furniture they will select will in a sense reflect these personalities. In effect, this selection will be their first child, it will be inheriting the traits of the father, it will be inheriting other traits from the mother. But, make no mistake about it, it will only come about if an adjustment takes place, and this adjustment will be a painful experience. Furniture, their first offspring, may be born among the most severe psychological birth pangs, and it is important for everyone along the line involved in the furniture industry to ask, "Am I going to be a helpful midwife in this situation or am I going to create difficulties in the delivery?" I think if you look at it in this rather picturesque relationship you will see the role that you and others play in this psychological situation. And what this means is that furniture is a product which has the power of arousing deep emotional reactions. Moreover, we are dealing here with emotions of the most varied kinds.

I remember when I was a child—and I suspect that some of you also in this room were children. Someone is going to say, "There goes that psychologist, going back to his childhood." Let me tell you that psychologists did not create childhood—we simply discovered it. It happens to be a phenomenon of human development, and if you want to ignore it you're perfectly free in a democratic society to do so. But if you want to sell a product to the consumer I suggest you take it into account because the consumer does, either at the conscious level or at the threshold of unconsciousness and deep in the recess from which springs basic motivating factors. I am sure that in your childhood you can remember an imposing piece of furniture; it might have been a heavy dining room table, as I recall—dark mahogany with massive legs and that richness of carved decoration which was characteristic of the post-Victorian era. The heavy mahogany table at that time represented much more than a surface on which dinner was served. It was a symbol of a goal; it was the promise of better things in life of which this

might have been the first token. It was also a kind of lesson in taste. It was a representative in the house of an aesthetic trend. Of course, we felt, too, that it gave us greater status in the eyes of our friends and neighbors who occasionally came to dinner.

Now, you might react and say that the average consumer might not verbalize this way and I would agree with you, but this is the analysis based on psychologically researching a problem. These are the factors that motivate the consumer and you should not lose sight of the fact. It is quite possible that as a young boy I was not aware of the deep true meaning, the concern of this mahogany table. It may be that I thought that it was a world in itself. Nevertheless, I had an affection for it, I admired it. I sat down on the floor and I traced its carvings on the legs; I became lost in obscure childish emotions; it was a kind of little brother; it had meaning, it breathed life, it was full of affection and promise. Ever since that time furniture has meant a good deal to me. I later learned something about different kinds of furniture, from modern to antique. And this feeling is not peculiar to me, it is a feeling that exists in everyone. You people in this industry are particularly fortunate in having a product with a built-in emotional core unlike many other products which must have an emotional centre added artificially or through grafting. But, what have you done with it? If you set out to destroy, to mutilate, to amputate, to subvert, to destroy this built-in emotional core through plan and design, you could not have done as well as you have done intuitively and perhaps unwittingly and perhaps by accident.

When a psychologist talks about childhood experiences he is not recalling only happy moments. We are generally after something deeper and more significant. Let us, for a moment change continents and generations. The years have gone by and we at the Institute have been studying social behavior in furniture buying on this continent for many years, and the whole pattern of human behavior in the market place. Furniture has not lost the emotional power it had, but too often today we find that furniture emotions are buried and that the emotions that are aroused are not the pleasurable ones that the consumer is seeking in the purchase of the product, not ones that lead to enjoyment, but ones which react against that. The atmosphere surrounding the acquisition of furniture today has changed for an unhealthy proportion of the consuming public. It is not one of undivided pleasure and satisfaction. On the contrary, it often represents a troublesome anxiety-ridden psychological experience to which the retail outlets and the designer and the manufacturer do not contribute clarity. Let me just illustrate.

There was recently a boat show in the New York Coliseum. Tens of thousands of people turned out to view those boats; only a fraction stayed to buy, but the boat industry has been able to instill a promise of tomorrow which we are all looking for, to instill the emotional satisfaction of reward through anticipation, by attracting tens of thousands of people who cannot afford but who dream about affording a boat. The automobile shows—and this despite the decline in automobile sales and the economic recession we are in to a greater extent in the States, but also in Canada—create a sense of excitement about the product they have to offer. Throngs choke the exhibition halls, people talk about it, newspapers

are filled with columns and pictures of the latest models, kids in school, businessmen at bars, families around the dinner table, talk about automobiles, talk about boats, talk about new homes. But very few people talk about furniture. We've just completed an extensive study of the effect of word-of-mouth advertising—we've published some parts of it in our quarterly, called *Motivations*—indicating that about 60 percent of all social conversation in the home and in the social situation, deals with products that we buy, have bought, plan to buy, are satisfied with, dissatisfied with, from physical things to intangible products such as vacations. Furniture ranks last—not for the purpose of this discussion, but ranks last in terms of social interests, in terms of excitement. It ranks last because the consumer, who is an inquisitive animal constantly desiring to acquire information, to be told how to use something, how to act in certain situations, gets no help generally from the advertising or merchandising techniques today current either in the media in which communication is established, newspaper ads or magazines, or in the retail shop. Of course, there are exceptions, but I am speaking of the general climate that exists. And therefore it is not difficult to understand that there's no popular enthusiasm, no gay uninhibited interests aroused by any furniture show, which is a hush-hush affair anyway—you've got to have a pass, it's got to be signed by President Eisenhower, you've got to go through mysterious gates, a decorator has to bring you, great mystery and witchcraft, it's solely for the trade, consumer stay out, you nasty little things (Laughter). And don't think that this is lost on the consumer.

You know, there's an old psychological axiom that you can catch more flies with honey than you can with vinegar. You can catch more consumers in the furniture industry—in any industry—by taking the consumer into your confidence than you can by excluding the consumer. A boat or an automobile costs \$3,500—much more than good furniture—its upkeep is expensive, it's a sometime-use article, it becomes obsolete rapidly, you don't spend much valuable time in it, the most precious time of your life is spent outside of these things, you spend your best hours at home, relaxing, enjoying your family, entertaining your friends—not among the boat and automobile, but among the furniture that you have. But when you compare the positions of cars and boats in our society—and I use them only as an example, I could cite others for you—you would never guess that such are the elementary and simple facts of life, and it would surprise no one that within the framework of the industry as a whole it is the manufacturers and dealers in furniture, new innovations in furniture particularly, who are apt to bear the brunt of today's unsatisfactory sales situation. People buy excitement and adventure. Human beings live in hope. And it applies to the furniture industry as well as it applies to the purchase of a vacation, an automobile or home, or a jar of instant coffee, to be very prosaic. People pay to get on the bandwagon. People pay for exhilarating experiences. But so long as such pleasurable anticipation is not awakened, people will not pay the price, they will not buy the furniture. And, therefore, we are confronted by problems. Why is good furniture the source of worry and fear instead of pleasure and attraction?

In the United States and Canada we are in a period of unprecedented wealth

and ability to purchase and we will continue to be despite the present economic slide—we must be if we are to survive. In the United States our gross national product last year was \$449 billion; in Canada your gross national product was \$35 billion. In ten years from now both our economies must increase at least with our present population growth, and to maintain our present situation, at least 50 percent. The choice is either survival or the choice is not to survive, and human beings generally choose to survive. Therefore, we are now in a period of downturn of our own making, and this can be turned upward . . . it's within our power, and at some point I want to get into that in a little more detail.

Why is furniture so low in the purchase plans of the majority of people when they are spending billions of dollars on every other product? Why does furniture tend to decrease in its share of the consumer's dollar? These are some of the questions that we have been working on—appliances in the States, and for other products here in Canada. Questions like these can only be solved by investigating the consumer with the modern tools that I talked about. His buying habits, his preferences, his unfulfilled needs, the whole individual and the cultural background of his major purchase decisions. Strangely enough, although furniture is heavily loaded with emotion, in the past no industry-wide motivational study has been done in this field. This is by way of a commercial.

Fortunately, we at the Institute have been conducting individual studies over the years and we have extensive experience on this level. What, then, have we found out about the root causes of resistance to furniture? This is our central finding: people who tend to run away from furniture do so because it reminds them of painful experiences, of unsolved emotional problems, of lack of clarity and understanding and the lack of direction by the industry and all of the people who participate in it. Now, buying furniture today mobilizes, more acutely perhaps than any other product, intimate and disturbing conflicts which men and women have been trying to repress and push back into their subconscious mind. These conflicts are typical of a fast-moving and dynamic society like ours, where everything changes with frightening rapidity, where social mores, educational ideas, concepts of family living, one's own social status, is constantly undergoing modification. Furniture comes into the picture because a chair, a bed, a table, has represented more than just a utilitarian object. Furniture has an expressive power which faithfully reflects every human situation—a throne is the king himself. And when feelings and relationships are puzzling, uncertain, unsolved, confused, the human conflict is transferred to the furniture itself. I didn't see the film that you saw this morning, but I was told about it and I think perhaps in that you might have got some inkling of what I am referring to here. To illustrate more concretely, let us take just a few typical conflicts with regard to furniture.

There is a tendency toward greater equilibrium in our Canadian and American societies, between the man and the woman. In the family and outside of it we are moving toward the real partnership, but this tendency has not yet been established as a stable and universal practice; there are still too many memories of the past, too many contradictory traditions and theories at work. Translated into the furniture situation, it is a debatable instance to what extent the husband

should be involved in interior decoration—this is generally seen as the woman's province, and this is generally wrong. Does a man give up his virility, his maleness, his masculinity because he is interested in home decoration? No. But, the logical, rational, intelligent aspect of our society has sort of pushed him into this attitude—he can't be a male logically and intelligently if he has too much interest in this—that is something for his wife to be concerned with.

Or to raise another question—what measure of financial freedom should be left to the wife? All this generally is the male province. All these unsolved conflicts stare into the face of the couple as soon as the idea of buying furniture emerges. Then there is the parent-child relationship—should we be permissive or authoritarian? . . . shall we let children crawl over furniture or discipline them? . . . what kind of furniture will fit the correct upbringing of children? Now, if you think this is a long way from the sale that is made in the store, it is not—it is a factor, a very important and vital link.

Millions of people are stepping up on the social ladder. They can afford to buy finer things. They are financially able to buy expensive furniture. However, financial improvement is not everything. Hundreds of thousands of people who recently advanced into various levels of the middle class realize consciously or subconsciously that they have no educated tastes, no knowledge of purchase, what they should buy, what fulfills their needs, and so they shy back. They ask themselves whether they will be able to choose wisely, whether they will not cover themselves with ridicule. The very thought of entering a glamorous store may bring pangs of difficulty, may make them sweat, a physical manifestation of psychological tension and stress. And so, they tend to avoid visiting the frightening store, and yet the prices in that store may be no higher and the services may be even better, and the communication of knowledge even greater than in a borax shop, but this is the pattern of use that you know, and what advertisement has ever attempted to bridge this gap for the consumer?

Could I see some of those ads that I've put on slides?

A very wonderful page for Sears' catalogue . . . but, what does it say to the consumer? Well, this is a better example of the ads which are appearing in American magazines, and I chose American ads because . . . well, because. This ad has some vitality. It starts to communicate. It has people in it. You know, people—they use furniture, they buy furniture. In 99 out of 100 furniture ads you couldn't tell that people exist—but people make furniture. I don't know why advertisers are frightened by people. This ad has vitality, it has life. It communicates. It is possible to establish a rapport with it, to establish some identity. I either like this woman or I dislike her. I either agree with what she says or I disagree, but I am involved, and a good ad must have not closure but involvement—reach out and take in. This ad is the result of a motivation study, it's one of a series in a campaign. Someone once asked me who did it and I don't know.

This is a very excellent ad . . . magnificent photograph of the sofa—so what! You know, a great many headlines have begun to appear lately based upon

motivational research concepts—you must get the consumer into the ad, into the headline, into the picture, so there is a mechanical transfer that takes place. All you do is use the word “YOU,” or some variation of it and immediately that happens. This is *your* sofa. Who said so? The consumer always asks a question—what’s in it for me? What am I going to get out of it? You must establish the consumer’s self-interest first and foremost if you are to further your own self-interests.

This particular ad establishes the company identity very well, but it forgot the consumer. And, so you go on with these . . . it’s the same thing. They’re stilted, they’re stiff—magnificent photographs but they do not communicate. And, you may come to me and say, “Well, the Starch rating on this ad is 6,000.” Let me say to you, sometimes it should have been much lower, you would have made more sales. Because you either communicate effectively through the channels of communication being open, or you build walls between yourself and the consumer.

Now, I’m not picking on these companies particularly. This is a pattern that exists in the industry and it should be broken because all it succeeds in doing is creating a curtain of sameness about the product. You can put your hand over the name and it could be anybody’s furniture. There is nothing unique or dramatic about it. It is simply advertising the furniture of today, it is simply a catalogue—a mail order catalogue of what is available—and you’re not doing anything to help initiate the uninitiated, the inexperienced, the unsophisticated, the young into the new buying patterns that they are looking for and reaching out for today.

The advertising also doesn’t help what we call the Age of Confusion. Few periods in history show such a profusion of styles as ours . . . every store has at least Colonial Provincial, Italian Provincial, Chinese Provincial, Alaskan Contemporary and Modern, all devoting itself to all varieties and forms of design. Simply the addition of a name, a designation, does not create this for the consumer. The furniture industry, I feel, labors under a delusion that the consumer is only 12 years old. The consumer is an adult, the consumer knows his or her self-interests, and she acts for or against the purchase of your product within the field itself and in competition with the whole variety of products competing for her dollar. “Which is the right one for me?” cry the anguished consumers. They ask without much hope of finding a satisfactory answer, either from the person in the shop, from the designer, the manufacturer or through the various means of advertising. If they are young they automatically go toward one of the modern styles because they think they ought to. Yet who knows whether in the view of their character, their mentality, they wouldn’t find greater emotional harmony in the midst of a period, say? Once again, in her hesitation, conflict of this kind directly leads to postponement of the purchase of furniture. A problem of postponement of furniture is as great, if not greater, as exists in any other industry. We’ll make do for one more year . . . we’ll make do until the children go to college . . . they’ve just got out of grammar school . . . or they have just entered kindergarten.

Now, in the framework of a presentation like this, it would be impossible

to analyze, even briefly, all the facets of this fascinating and all important cycle of commercial problems that I have indicated. Nevertheless, I am certain that you have begun to grasp what I, at least, consider the central truths. The large portion of your potential customers are running away from furniture because it creates psychic tensions which they are attempting to escape at any price, and because you are creating for them what we psychologically call a Misery of Choice. You are presenting so much to them from which to choose, without any guide, without any road map through the jungle, both in advertising and in the retail outlets themselves, without any guidance in the form of a salesman being truly a friend and counselor and ally of the consumer, helping them over these difficult psychological problems. That's what occurs—this Misery of Choice, confusion, postponement of the decision to buy. We believe this to be a most important aspect of furniture merchandising. We believe that it teaches us that we must permeate our promotional activities and selling techniques with an understanding of the consumer. In many cases modern furniture selling has become—and it must—therapeutic in character. I am not recommending that each retail outlet have a psychologist on staff who specializes in furniture problems, but this understanding of the consumer's needs today is something that is most important. You must be able to help dissolve the conflict and the inhibitions which prevent so many customers from satisfying their furniture needs. As a matter of fact, we feel that the number one task facing the makers and sellers and designers of furniture is to recognize that in our era of abundance most sales obstacles are really not of an economic nature but of a psychological block. Once this realization is understood you can do something about it. The job is not an easy one but it can be performed, and it can be performed successfully.

Our era has created not only psychological resistance to furniture but also many positive appeals. There is a strong cultural tendency in our society toward greater individualism. There is an equally strong tendency in our culture to replace the automobile as the symbol of status or at least to force the automobile to share it with the home, and this is where furniture can play a most important role. In our society mass production and mass communication techniques have reached their greatest heights; at the same time, perhaps, there is a natural reaction to this, there is an increasing pressing need for personal values, for the feeling that one is a distinct and unique entity, for expressing *my* personality. Today Canadians and Americans have a great desire to feel that we are individuals, not merely a member of anonymous groups. This last election in Canada revealed a desire on the part of Canadians to express their individualities. Let me say to you that the Canadian consumer is not one year, two years, three years, five years behind the American consumer—they are on a fairly equal level in their desires and their needs. It is the Canadian industry, the Canadian manufacturer who is behind the times and who is falling to meet the needs of his market, which accounts for the fact that so many Canadians buy in the United States, whether clothing or vacations. It explains why \$123 million adverse balance on tourist attractions exists in the Canadian market as against Americans coming here. If the Canadian industry, business and manufacturer recognized that in Canada you have something distinctly Canadian, and which is good, and for

which you should have no inferiority complex, you would get greater sales here. In the vacation area, for example, you will see a motel open up and instead of using a good Indian name for it like Chicoutimi, or a French name like Quebec, it's El Rancho Grande Motel (Laughter) . . . because someone thinks the American wants what he has at home. If he did, he wouldn't come to Canada.

We are mobile today, we are looking for new experiences, not only in vacations but in furniture. And so we resent the anonymity of mass production, that "Me, too" copying that takes place. In our best contemporary novels and movies and television, the tendency is to get away from the type and to portray a unique human being. Thirty years ago Sinclair Lewis wrote *Babbitt*, the stereotype of that time. Today we have the same situation; we read increasingly about the lady in the sack, or the man in the grey flannel suit. And, similarly, we read about fictional characters who revolt against belonging to a type and who are determined to be themselves. Similarly, it is astonishing to contemplate the tremendous variety of interior decoration one finds in American and Canadian homes today, especially when one compares it to the almost obligatory sameness that existed in the Victorian era. Often it is simply touching to watch how this urge to feel that one is an individual struggles for some kind of expression. Our department store surveys show that people, even in the most modest financial circumstances, are willing to pay high prices for having towels and other possessions with their own initials on them. Perhaps, as one respondent said, we eat a sandwich at luncheon for a week to make up for this because we want to feel it's our own. Now, ladies and gentlemen, cultural trends certainly contain probably the most powerful buying motivation. You are in a position to cash in on this strong trend. Craftmanship as opposed to mass production. I'm not suggesting that we go back to the guild days of individual production, but we can create the illusion that what we are producing is meeting the needs of the people today.

You know none of us buys rationally entirely. Eighty-five percent of our judgments are emotional; 15 percent are critical. We don't want 100 percent rational — there's no pleasure in that. We don't want to be fools — you cannot distort, you cannot create unbelievability, but you don't have to be 100 percent factual. Promise is important in the human being, and promise is even more important in furniture. If you can create the feeling that you are meeting the needs of individuals, you are going a long way toward meeting this trend. The ads that I showed you, and others that we can show you, don't do that. They create uniformity, anonymity, mass production, regardless of what the price of the ad is, or the furniture in that ad. And seeing individual pieces designed by individual designers, people recognize their own yearning for distinct personality.

Another important cultural trend today is the home-based life. On the economic level, whole industries such as the paint, varnish and lacquer industry—just to quote one—thrive on it. It is common knowledge, for instance, that 70 percent of all interior painting is done by the families themselves. Togetherness is not something that McCall's invented; it happens to be a psychological phenomenon. Togetherness is something that we are all looking for. We want to belong . . . we want to be part of . . . we want to fit into our society . . . we

want to be able to function within that society. Furniture is a means of helping us perform and function within that society, if it is properly communicated to the consumer. On the psychological level there is this deep yearning for finding satisfaction and fulfillment within the families. It evolves almost to a new philosophy of living. I don't need to stress the implication for the furniture industry.

The third element worth mentioning is the changed morality with respect to spending. This is true regardless of temporary holding back. People hold back today in buying automobiles because automobiles seem to be less satisfying than they were a year ago. The psychological phenomenon takes place first, the financial decline follows afterwards. We don't really believe any longer that hard work and saving are the only desirable goals in our life—yet, somehow or other they remain the criteria of our feeling of morality. Your industry is now confronted with the problem of liberating people for freer spending, from the vestiges of that restraint in which they no longer really believe. The question of price, of course, is an important one, but more often than not we find it not so much a financial problem as a moral problem. Through purposeful promotion, advertising, sales techniques and good design, and good production, you should be able to answer the challenge inherent in this transition from one trend to another. You must be able to make the buyer feel that it is only right and moral when he enriches his life and makes it more pleasurable by surrounding himself with good furniture, with new furniture. Give him moral permission to spend by pointing out the rewards inherent in the situation. All I've said here represents the larger framework of selling furniture, the total background of what should be your efforts. It is now our duty to examine and solve a number of specific promotional and advertising problems I feel before I get off this platform. And I just want to highlight these for you.

Are you sure that your salesmen are correctly and sufficiently educated for the tasks that confront them today in the light of some of the things I have just mentioned? People buy more goods than ever before in history. They have more money and they will continue to spend it. As a consequence, there is also a new buying psychology. Contemporary woman asks more questions than she ever asked before, and so does her husband. They are more suspicious. They want to learn more about new materials and how well they fit their own needs, and because she is in transition, there is less security; she behaves more emotionally therefore than her forebears. So, whoever sells furniture must take into consideration these prevailing trends in consumer psychology, understand and translate them into meaningful application in their own industry.

The second problem is the store itself—and this is a problem that should be the concern of the manufacturer and the designer who has spent hours in creating something and then puts it into a frame that destroys it. The manufacturer creates the product and ships it to a retail outlet where there is nothing but massed furniture down 170 feet of floor space, or where they are piled one on top of the other. If that retail outlet is going to sell more, it has to display it properly, and this is something that you want as a manufacturer because if

they sell more you will make more, both furniture and dollars. So, this is an important area and I am going to skip over it without getting into details.

The third point is that furniture symbolizes not only the home life and home atmosphere, but is also a many-faceted symbol of the individual. In the course of our lives, whether we will it or not, we form a deep emotional attachment to furniture that we live with. The bed we sleep in is in turn a refuge, an escape, a comfort; it can therefore protect us; at the same time it can confine us, it can imprison us upon will, it can be a place of sorrow because of the togetherness it promises that may not have been fulfilled. Some chairs, stiffly and austere discipline the sitter, caring nothing for him but that he takes on the desired social pose or configuration which the chair would like to provide, which the designer insists be provided. Some chairs pamper the individual, yielding themselves to his comfort. For example, a rocking chair has a particularly noticeable psychological purpose—it's a replica of the crib in adult form. Generally speaking, furniture permits dramatization of one's own psychological make-up. The very fact that some of you laugh indicates that it's true, because you can only draw on your own experiences. The only thing that we know and can respond to is that which we have experienced. Everything else is a value judgment. Furniture permits dramatization of one's own psychological makeup—puritanical or sensuous inner tendencies, heaviness or lightness of spirit, formality or Bohemianism—all may find their exact translation in furniture. Remember that when you sell furniture you are apt to touch sensitive psychic cores in the human being. You're selling psychological mirrors in which a man or a woman see themselves as they are, or as they would like to be. Perhaps more than any other selling careers, in the furniture business it is essential to have vision and insight.

In the same way, you must be able to handle adequately the emotional problems raised by old furniture. From the emotional point of view the attachment to old furniture may often prevent people from buying new sets and pieces. Furniture holds memories. It is an eye-witness to so much of importance in our lives. People would feel disloyal or guilty if they got rid of an old arm chair or bed set; you know, that's how the attic came into being. We find this problem in other fields, too. The study we did for Mosher Safe on getting rid of old safes—if you think it's difficult to get rid of old furniture, try to get rid of an old safe. Well, there's an important psychological principle involved here—never talk down, never minimize or insult the old furniture. You would be insulting the emotions of the owner. Or, take the instance of the automobile salesman when you bring your car in for a trade-in, and he walks around the car and he kicks the tires and looks under the hood and at the upholstery and he says, "Pretty beat-up, isn't it?" And, you've only had this car two years, and you've been out there every Sunday morning polishing it, you've taken magnificent care and you've put every kind of gadget on it—he's not kicking the tires—he's kicking you. And no matter what price he offers you, you turn it down, and then you go down the street and the psychologically geared salesman says, after going through the same motions, "Well, you look like a man who knows how to take care of an automobile," and you sigh, and you take \$100 less on the trade-in (Laughter).

And, therefore, old furniture, too, has importance. Talk appreciatively, talk soothingly, as if you were talking about a beloved family pet who must disappear because of his old age (Laughter). Understand the consumer. You know, many more sales would be made by retail outlets if they took time to visit the homes of the people buying the furniture, and they could talk about something real. Or, if that became a physical difficulty, if you sit down for ten minutes and asked a woman to describe her home, you exhibit understanding, you say I am interested in you and your problems. Too many sales efforts say let's make this damned sale, and please do it fast, because I want to get to the next customer. You're exhibiting then only your own self-interest. This is true at the retail level as well as at the manufacturing level. You have to show how to dispose of old furniture. We have to close down the attics of Canada and America. Have you really worked out the best techniques toward selling in the home?

Since we are in the home, pay more attention to the role of children. In advertising and in the home, and in the retail outlet, and in the design, remember children are people, too. And, as a happy father of two children, I can certify that I have fears about furniture and my children, but I often resist buying expensive furniture because of the wear and tear, and soil, and the breakage, but as a psychological researcher, I find that this liability may even be turned into an asset by properly understanding it, and I am not going to get into the details of that either. You see, I get emotionally involved in this problem. (Laughter).

But, let me bring this to a conclusion.

Have you ever thought about furniture as gifts? Here is another place where furniture ranks last. Nobody thinks of giving furniture as a gift, except the mother to her daughter perhaps, but, why not furniture? It's not too expensive . . . we give many more expensive things. Junior graduates from high school, he gets a new automobile! . . . in some homes.

Well, I tried to indicate to you some of the patterns that exist, some of the problems that you ought to think about. If I do nothing else but create a little constructive discontent here this afternoon, I will have considered the time well spent. If I can create a little bit of brain-scratching the time will have been well spent. Because, what I have tried to reflect for you is in analytical and diagnostic terms how the consumer functions in the market place, what makes her desire to buy, what creates a block toward the purchase of your products, and how you stack up in the competitive profile in the market place.

The swing—the cultural and sociological swing—is in the direction of the furniture industry. You can either grab the brass ring as the merry-go-round circles, or you can fall off your horse and lose your share of the consumer dollar. Good furniture has always been a privilege in human life. For the psychological reasons I have sketched it may have slipped in our contemporary culture, but it can be brought back if you are desirous of doing a job, if you have been properly motivated that there is a greater profit in doing this job, if you understand the needs that the consumer is expressing, fumblingly, perhaps, inarticulately, but

definitively. And, so, viewing this situation as an objective researcher and a subjective human being, I can feel sure of one thing, that if you study the problem, diagnostically analyze it, you can find the prescription and have it filled and enjoy greater prosperity, greater growth in this industry, than you have up until now. Thank you very much. (Applause)

ANGLIN: Thank you very much, Mr. Gilman. I'm sorry that because of a little delay over luncheon difficulties which was a calculated risk we had to take today, that we got off to a late start. I am going to suggest that instead of going into the individual discussion groups as we did this morning that we simply take a ten-minute break and at the sound of the gong reassemble here, by which time I guarantee to have a fresh body of air in the room, and we will have a question-and-answer period from the floor with Mr. Gilman back on the podium, if he can stand it. Thank you very much.

(TEN MINUTE BREAK)

ANGLIN: If you will come to order we will have about 25 minutes for questions. I would like to point out one thing to Mr. Gilman in starting and ask him to comment on it. I was very interested in his remarks that furniture is so hard to get at, that too often the showroom is an exclusive place, and I don't know whether he is aware that the Canadian Furniture Mart pioneered the radical idea of inviting the public to come in on two or three open nights. This idea was tried, I believe—it has been tried here two or three years—at the Merchandise Mart in Chicago this January for the first time. And, oh, a lot of the manufacturers were against this . . . it was too much trouble . . . it meant they had to staff their booths one more night. I take it you would think that this is a good thing, and that they are on the right track, Mr. Gilman. Will you comment on that?

GILMAN: There is an ever-increasing tendency in business to take the consumer into the confidence of the company. The big corporate industry is trying to personalize itself, to project a living personality beyond the façade of bricks and vice-presidents and water coolers on to the public. It's also important for furniture companies to indicate that they, too, wish to take the consumer into their confidence. This is one way of communicating, one way of establishing rapport, and therefore this business of the showroom being restricted to those who have passes, etc. is fine, if it's designed to maintain the wholesale aspect of the industry. But because it has become known to the consumer and because so much behind-the-scenes manoeuvring of getting-it-wholesale takes place, that what has happened is that this has rebounded to the discredit and created a negative image for the industry rather than a positive image in serving the purpose for which it was originally created as a show place for the practitioners in the business.

Perhaps one of the answers might be that there should be massive retail shows, just as you have a furniture mart in New York and a merchandise mart in Chicago, it might well be that it is necessary to have this, too, for the consumer, to give the consumer the same feeling of design, of lay-out, of planning, of organized interior that you find at the industry level. Even in a good department store you find feet after feet of sofas and feet after feet of chairs and floor after floor of beds. The consumer rebels against that because if there is any validity to the revulsion against mass production, if there is any truth to the desire for individuality, we want all of the benefits of mass production, but we want it to meet our own individual needs and desires. Then the kind of displays which take place in the retail outlets today violate that basic, human motivation. A wall is built rather than a rapport established, and I think that here is need for the furniture industry to find new ways of merchandising to meet the needs of the consumer today.

ANGLIN: Thank you, Dr. Gilman. I am now calling for questions from the floor. Frank Moritsugu is going to pass out the microphone and, please, would you wait until he gets there and say who you are.

KENNETH ATWOOD, *J. H. Atwood & Sons, Fort Erie, Ont.*: Mr. Gilman, you mentioned before about not seeing too harshly the old furniture. Could you elaborate a little bit more on how we could solve the problem of taking in the old furniture, not allowing too much so that we are going to lose our shirts, so to speak, on this, and how perhaps a market for used furniture might be developed?

GILMAN: I think that one of the things that has to happen first, perhaps, is that the industry has to feel that it is going to move more furniture and believe that it will move more furniture from the manufacturing level through the retail outlets if it helps to solve the problem of disposing of the old furniture. If the old furniture is what I have indicated our researchers find it to be, then there is a serious problem, and there is some need for developing used furniture outlets, not broken-down junk shops, but outlets which give the furniture the dignity which the human being accords to the furniture, even though it is used, whether in its original state of discard, or repaired. You need to understand the importance of used furniture among people. What you have to do, perhaps, is to get the chairs and the furniture out of the attics where they have become moth-eaten. Perhaps an authentic list gathered from welfare organizations stating what needy families can use might be one way. I'm groping for answers here, but this might be one way to meet this problem. The whole area of hand-me-downs . . . a man or a woman may be loath to give up pieces even if they dislike them when they have been inherited from close relatives and they are just going to end up on junk heaps, so there must be some positive way of utilizing these again. I remember a wonderful anecdote about an auction. People were buying everything from old-fashioned bathtubs to supposed Rembrandts for 50 cents, and so on down the line—old crockery,

dishes, chandeliers, and what have you. And then, finally, the auctioneer held up a fur coat and asked what he was offered for the fur coat. None of the ladies in the audience made a move. The auctioneer said that he was sure one of the ladies in the audience had a maid, or knew of a needy woman who could use a fur coat. The bidding started immediately. With an opportunity for ego enhancement to do something charitable, it was an opportunity to down-grade myself by indicating that I was buying used furniture, a used fur coat, or used furniture. And so the coat was finally sold, and the other two were sold for a very good price.

There is the need to understand this problem and to do something about it, and to make the appeal in such a way that you understand what the aspiration and the feelings are of the people. Now, there is the example of a study we did in Germany for a company which sells motorized bikes. The company was advertising to 16 million bicycle owners. They were trying to reach them without knowing that the 16 million bicycle owners were less interested in buying a motorized bike than they were in buying a new small automobile—a Volkswagen, an Opel, a Mercedes, a Messerschmidt—and so they got nowhere. We indicated to them through the studies we did that they ought to suggest that the motorized bike was the first step into the motorized world for these 16 million bicycle owners. This was how they could get to the small automobile for which they were saving their pfennigs and their marks, and they were not wasting this money which they were saving. It was the first step into the motorized world. A great many things were done, but the kernel of this concept applies to the furniture field. Many people cannot buy new furniture, but they want to make changes. It may well be that repairing old furniture and selling it in enhanced settings is one way of moving new furniture out to the people who can afford to buy, making new purchasers of the people who cannot afford the new furniture but who can buy used furniture, and who in time become a purchaser for new furniture, too. You broaden the market. You create change and flux. You create transition and you always create greater demand by creating different levels at which people can purchase. Not only high-priced new furniture, not only middle-priced furniture, not only borax, but also good used furniture, inexpensive used furniture. These are some of the things that might be done. In any case, it is an area in which something must be done and the industry should address itself to the problem.

ANGLIN: Thank you, Mr. Gilman.

JOHN KETTLE, *Managing Editor, The Canadian Architect, Don Mills, Ont.*: Mr. Gilman, you were talking about people's growing feeling for individuality and a resistance to buying mass-produced goods. You suggest that there was a feeling growing that people wanted craftsmanship rather than mass production, and you said that you weren't suggesting a return to craftsmanship or to the guilds, but rather that the furniture manufacturer could create the illusion that what he was producing was meeting the needs of individuals. Isn't there a danger in this?

After all, the consumer, as you yourself say, is adult, mature, he's got his own self-interest—won't he realize sooner or later that he is being fooled more badly than he was before and that he will react more strongly to this than he will to, let us say, the honest statement that we are producing mass-produced furniture, and therefore it is cheaper, or some other statement of that sort?

GILMAN: The one thing I want to avoid is leaving any impression that you can fool consumers. Believability — integrity — is the most important ingredient in human relationships. Therefore, you cannot try to fool the consumer and be successful in your enterprise. On the other hand I indicated to you that the consumer does not ask for 100 percent perfection, 100 percent believability, even 100 percent truth, if you will. We want a little bit of embroidery, we want to have the feeling that maybe we can be a king—for \$1.98 purchase of something or other. We want to have the feeling that we are the recipients of the best that can be produced by mass production at the lowest possible price. But it is the climate and the aura in which a thing is sold that give us believability and tailor it for the individuality which we are yearning for. For example, many large new home developments are appearing all over the United States and Canada. You take a massive production like Levittown, Pa.—10,000 homes—they're all built pretty much to pattern, yet people live there not more than three months and individual changes begin to occur. Somebody paints his house yellow with green shutters, someone else puts in a stone patio, someone else builds a breezeway, and another builds a garage—all reflections of the individuality of our own value system and our own needs and desires.

In the advertising of furniture, instead of the examples that I cited, some of the individuality is developed, uniqueness for the product; I choose that furniture because it more nearly fits my needs and aspirations. If in the retail outlets the furniture salesman is taught that he can make a better sale with more profit to himself, benefit his company better and consequently be rewarded, by having the self-interest of the consumer at heart, by talking with them about their problems and then trying to recommend to them what they can best afford emotionally and financially, than he can by trying to push on them the biggest possible sale which results in dissatisfaction immediately after purchase and which means I never come back to that store again or, if I am less timid I try to get you to take it back, or if it's a department store I don't pay my bills until you do, because I've charged it. And so there are many avenues by which you can project this individuality, this concern and interest in the consumer, right along the line by designing to meet various types of people. People can group themselves in groups. They try to identify with groups, and therefore, I'm not looking for something which is just for me, the Great Individualist alone. I know part of the pattern, but I want to feel in buying that there has been some concern with me as an individualist.

RUSSELL SPANNER, *Spanner Products Ltd., Toronto*: Mr. Gilman, Shakespeare said, "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet." Does this apply to your

El Rancho Grande Motels? With a different name, would it be filled every night? What I am trying to say is, how important is a name in furniture? I wouldn't say, "I'm going to bring out my new backyard group." I don't think that would sell—but how important is the name? Would putting a Canadian name on furniture bring a positive reaction from the Canadian people, or do you feel that the public would be more receptive to the name of a foreign and respected land?

GILMAN: You know, Shakespeare was a very good motivational researcher, because he understood people, and he was able to communicate with them, and that's why he has lasted a long time, and that's why some other gentlemen who wrote in his time have disappeared. And so, simply changing the name of the rose would not change the rose, and simply changing El Rancho Grande to Chicoutimi Lodge would not make it Canadian. A name is important if the name is truly descriptive of whatever it is trying to identify. If it communicates, if it creates an aura, a climate, a picture, then it is an effective name, and I think that in furniture too much effort has gone into finding elusive, exciting, dramatic, status-enhancing names. And I would suspect that among furniture there is probably a greater conglomeration of names which mean nothing than in any other industry, because somebody, somewhere, felt sometime that the magic of a name would solve anything. Well, if that name is Marilyn Monroe, it might go a long way to solving certain problems, but the name itself is meaningless unless it connotes and creates an image. And so, when you say Marilyn Monroe certain people in this audience react . . . others just would probably react more so to Gregory Peck . . . but, each of these symbolizes something meaningful.

The furniture industry has simply taken names and tagged them on because they were trying to give furniture status, heritage, contemporary, without recognizing whether or not these names were meaningful in terms of the consumer, whether they rang bells with the consumer. You can take the most magnificent name and destroy it, and you can take the most simple name and build it up into something tremendously exciting. The word "perfume" is not any more dramatic, exciting or rolling on the tongue than the word "cabbage," but they connote different pictures, and so cabbage is cabbage and perfume is perfume. And so you've got to know what pictures your names are connoting . . . what you are trying to get across . . . what is the aura and the climate in which you project that name. It's not enough that they sound good to the guy in the agency or the advertising department who picks the name and says, "Heritage . . . wonderful. It has tradition behind it . . . has this behind it . . . has that behind it." And I could go down the list with other names in the same way. But I think you've got to understand what you are trying to name, understand how your consumer feels about it, then give it a name that is meaningful and not depend upon the word but depend upon the whole climate that you surround the name with.

Col. Alain thanked Mr. Gilman and the other participants in the day's conference and announced that all present were invited to remain for cocktails as the guests of the Art Gallery of Toronto and Canadian Homes and Gardens.

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